

Comic Plays and Dialogues



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COMIC PLAYS and DIALOGUES

BY
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THESE plays represent bits of nonsense put into dialogue which will be relished as unique in their field. The comedy consists principally of play upon words and in a certain twist or slant which at the outset excites the risibilities. There is comedy also in the scenes and situations. Without exception every play will raise a laugh and most of them are funny throughout the greater part of the dialogue and action.

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Comic Plays and Dialogues

HOKE AND POKE

CHARACTERS

HOKE, *Plain and simple*

POKE, *Simple and plain*

COSTUMES

Extreme burlesque. Blackface.

HOKE. Say, Poke, Ise been a-lookin' fo' you. Kase why ain't yo' been down to see me no mo' heah lately?

POKE. Why, Ise been sick, Hoke.

HOKE. Sick? Why, what seemed to be de mattah wid ye?

POKE. Well, at fust eberting seemed to be de mattah; but it fin'ly tuhned out dat I had a pain across my mis'ry, besides what ailed me.

HOKE. It's a wondah dat yo' didn't die. Did yo' hab a doctah to come an' see yo' when yo' wuz sick, Poke?

POKE. Yas, suh, I had two ob 'em an' de las' wun said dat I had two buckets o' lossis.

HOKE. What did yo' tell 'im?

POKE. I tole 'im dat he wuz plum wrong; dat I nevah had but wun, an' it wuz jes ha'f full.

HOKE. W'en de doctahs zamined yo', did dey take yo' temptuah?

POKE. I dunno 'bout dat; but wun ob 'em tuck my watch an' de oden tuck my pocket knife.

HOKE. Huh! Dey sho musta tuck to you.

POKE. Yes'n ef I evah kotches dem two buhds wun at a time, Ise gwine-a put a tuck in de seat o' deir pants wid de toe o' my shoe.

HOKE. Doan do nuthin' rash, now, Poke. Yo' knows dat yo' wife has hahd enuf time makin' a libbin fo' all dem kids, 'thout habbin to pay yo' fine. Yo' shoah am got a good wife, yo' is.

POKE. Yassah, dat am a fac'. Dat woman tickles me

neahly to death evah night. Las' nite I neahly died a-laffin'.

HOKE. I doan' see how dat yo' wife could a-tickled yo' las' nite, when she dun stayed all nite wid her mammy.

POKE. Well, yo' see, tho', she made a quilt yistiddy an' put it right on de bed whe' I sleeps, an' de fool ting am got a ruffle on it dat tickles me undah de chin.

HOKE. Say, dat 'min's me ob a queernundrum. What is it dat a woman am always a-lookin' fo', but nevah wants to fin'?

POKE. Bet I knows dat. It am love lettahs in huh ole man's coat pocket.

HOKE. Nope, yo's sho' wrong on dat.

POKE. Well, den it must be haihs on 'is coat collah.

HOKE. No, dat ain' it. W'at yo' tink dese wimmens keer 'bout haihs an' lettahs?

POKE. Well, den, what is it dat a woman is always a-lookin' fo', but nevah wants to fin'?

HOKE. Why, it's a hole in her sock.

POKE. Well, I say dat am easy, ain' it? But say. Yo's so prevaricatin'. Did yo' evah see a sock dat ain' had no hole in it?

HOKE. Why, co's I is. Yo' must be crazy.

POKE. Yo's seen 'em, den, widout no hole atall?

HOKE. Why sho'.

POKE. How in de Sam Hill could yo' put de fool ting on, den?

HOKE. I guess I has to han' it to yo' on dat. But does yo' evah 'membah seein' any ob dese heah lil ole fuzzy wuzzy dogs 'bout so high? [Indicates with hand.]

POKE. Yes, I is, is yo'?

HOKE. Sho'. But does yo' know how to tell which is his head an' which is his tail?

POKE. No. How?

HOKE. Stick a pin in 'im an' see which end barks. [Sticks pin in POKE, who barks and jumps and runs off stage as curtain falls.]

A MIDNIGHT EXCURSION

CHARACTERS

FARMER WILKINS,	<i>Foxy owner of melon patch</i>	GOGGLES,	<i>Near-sighted but bold</i>
SAMBO,	<i>Colored man who has a tooth for melons and a weakness for sleeping</i>	CURLY MACK BUD	<i>All of one mind, viz., about hooking melons</i>
SNIP,	<i>Not very brave</i>		

COSTUMES

Ordinary, or extreme burlesque, for farmer and Sambo.

PROPERTIES

Gun, blanket, sacks, melons or substitutes of some kind, goggles.

Enter FARMER WILKINS from right

FARMER WILKINS. By gum, I shore have a fine prospec' fer melons this year. Melons on the vines an' melons in their rin's as big as—as big as a barrel, more or less. Ef I kin jest keep them dern kids out now, I'll be all hunk-a-dunkus. But I'll fix 'em. They cain't git ahead o' me. [Exit left.]

Enter SAMBO from right

SAMBO. Lawsee, I sholy am glad dat Mistah Wilkinses wattahmillions am a-gittin' ripe. Dis dahkey am mos' fon' of dat kin' o' fruit. Dey ain' nuthin'—[listens]. Peahs to me dat I kin heah feet tracks a-comin' an ef dey sees me, I'se diskivered. [Exit left.]

Enter SNIP and GOGGLES at center

SNIP. Go easy there now, Goggles. Right yonder's the patch.

GOGGLES [*who is several steps ahead*]. Well, I reckon I knowed it. Why don't you come on? What you skeered at?

SNIP. I ain't skeered, I tell you, no more than you are.

GOGGLES. Well, you shore act that-a-way. I'd hate to be sich a 'fraid cat.

SNIP. Wait a minute. [*Anxiously*.] What if we's to get shot?

GOGGLES. Oh, never mind gittin' shot. Ole man Wilkins won't see us an' he couldn't hear thunder.

SNIP. But he might 'a' doped his melons. Let's go back.

GOGGLES. Naw, come on. I'm go'n' to have me a melon.

SNIP. Listen! [*A noise is heard outside at right*.] Wow! [SNIP jumps and grabs GOGGLES as he yells.]

GOGGLES. Le's beat it now! You've ruint ever'thing.

[*Exeunt both at left*.]

Reënter FARMER WILKINS at right

FARMER WILKINS. Sambo! Oh, Sambo!

SAMBO [*outside at left*]. Yassah, I'se a-comin' dis minut. Sho, chickey! Get fer dat roost agin. [*Enters, brushing chicken feathers from clothes*.]

FARMER WILKINS. Where you been, Sambo?

SAMBO. No whar, massa, 'cept jes' takin' a walk. Yo' see, mah health ain' been so very scrivinatin' heah lately, an' so I needs a walk as a soht uv stem windah—ah, I mean stimyolatah.

FARMER WILKINS. Never mind your stem winders. What I want is my shot gun that you borrowed last summer.

SAMBO. Now, lemme see. I'se got dat gun all right; but my li'l Rastus am a-drivin' nails wid de hammah, an' Mirandy am a-totin' watah fum de spring, an' my boy Gawge am a-usin' de barrel fo' a helescope——what yo' look at de stahrs wid. [*Makes motion of looking through telescope*.]

FARMER WILKINS. You hurry up an' fetch that shotgun to me, you rubber-lipped rascal, before I do you harm. I think them boys'll git in my melon patch tonight, an' I want to give 'em a warm reception.

SAMBO. Yassah. I'se gone dis minut an' I sho specs dat powdah an' shot'll be wahm enuf fo' 'em, too. [Exit left.]

FARMER. I'll show 'em, I will! These here gamboozled kids'll find out a thing or two they don't know yit. I'll blow a hole in some uv 'em big enough t' poke yer fist in. It ain't altogether so much that I keer about the melons they'd git as it is hatin' to let 'em outdo me in anything, that hurts my dander.

Reënter SAMBO [blowing through gun as a horn]

SAMBO. Heah, heah, heah, Mistah Wilkins, heah's yo' shotgun.

FARMER. All right, Sambo, ye kin go git ye a melon now, if ye want one. Don't git but one, though.

SAMBO. Ef I wants one. Huh, I ain' nevah seed de time yit when I didn't wants one. But I won't git but one, Mistah Wilkins [FARMER WILKINS starts off left]—in a pig's eye. I'se got tree small wives an' children dat laks wattahmillion same as white fo'kses. I'll jest fotch dem one home an' git two fo' myse'f. [Exit Sambo right, as Bud, Curley and Mack enter from left.]

BUD. We'll get us one apiece, Mack, and eat them outside the patch.

MACK. Suits me all O. K. How about you, Curly?

CURLY. Naw, le's eat 'em in the patch an' then stack the rin's up where ole man Wilkins can see 'em first thing in the morning.

MACK. Yonder he comes. We'd better beat it. [All go out at left.]

Enter FARMER WILKINS from center, carrying gun and blanket.

FARMER. Now, by heck, I'll lay down here an' wait at the edge of the patch, an' if any boys show up I'll shoot 'em on the spot. [Lies down and stretches out.] Boys

will be boys and some of 'em make preachers an' other respectable people, but stealin' watermelons ain't no way to begin. [All is quiet for a few moments, then FARMER WILKINS falls asleep and snores loudly.]

SAMBO pokes head in at right

SAMBO. Fo' de Lawd's sake, ef Massa Wilkins ain't a-sleepin' jes lak a sawmill. Bein's he's so interested in slumbah, I'll jes have another look at dat wattahmillion patch. Maybe I will take one home sho nuff now. [Exit right.]

FARMER [in his sleep]. Haw there, Kate! Haw! Git offa that row o' corn.

MACK, CURLY, BUD, SNIP and GOGGLES appear at left

MACK. Ever'thing's all right, boys. Come on, now for the melon patch. [All tiptoe past FARMER WILKINS toward right, as if going to melon patch.] [When last one is almost past FARMER WILKINS awakes and rises, presenting gun.]

FARMER. Aha, ye little rascals! So I have got ye now, eh? Woa. Gee, back up and stand still, won't ye? So ye wuz goin' t' hook my melons? Pst. [Jumps toward boys, all of whom huddle together and jump as if frightened to death.]

MACK [tremblingly]. No, Mr. Wilkins, we wuz huntin' some persimmons.

BUD. Ma sent me after the calves.

CURLY. An' I wuz a-lookin' fer——lookin' fer a-a pa's false teeth that he lost today.

FARMER. Wall, now, they ain't no simmons, ner no calves, ner no false teeth a-growin' aroun' here, so I reckin, ter save ye from bein' filled as full o' holes as a pepper box, ye'd better skip out o' here. S-K-Y-P, skip. [As boys run out FARMER kicks at last one, loses balance from missing and falls.]

SAMBO [puts in head at right]. Well, I be Swanee Rivah, ef dat ole fool ain't a-lettin' 'em go. W'y, dat man ain't

got no mo' sense nor a las' yeah's bird's nest dat am full o' chicken mites.

FARMER [*rises and turns on SAMBO*]. Who you talkin' about, bein' crazy?

SAMBO. Nobody, Massa, 'ceptin' my shadder.

FARMER. Don't tell me that. You're too black to make a shadow. Why, nigger, you are so black that the lightning bugs foller you around in the daytime.

SAMBO. Nevah mine dat now, Massa Wilkins. I ain' so green dat a bunch o' boys pulls me fo' der cucumber, lak dey did you.

FARMER. That'll do out of you, Sambo. If you think you're so smart, just you take this gun and stay here in my place a while. An' don't you dare to go to sleep, either. [SAMBO takes gun. *Exit FARMER.*]

SAMBO [*sits on blanket*.] All right, Massa, dat ain' no trick at all fo' dis dahkey to keep his eyes open. Dey ain' no bunch o' boys gwineter git by me, neithah, less'n they gits sumthin' else. Why, I'll shoot de tail lights off'n deir cabooses, ef dey comes heah agin. [Getting drowsy] I'se a bad coon, I is. I don'— care—who—comes along, I'll—[*Head falls onto chest, gun slips out of his hand and SAMBO begins to snore loudly.*] [Boys return at left. After looking carefully about, they go silently past SAMBO and into melon patch.]

SAMBO [*still asleep*]. Oh, you niggahs, fo' in a line, we's gwine a hab a chicken laig, one mo' time. Shet yo' black mouf, 'Randy, I ain't gwine cut no wood, I tells ye. Rastus, tu'n loose o' dat cat's tail an' bring you pappy's banjo heah.

[*Boys return at right, carrying sacks which appear to be filled with melons.*]

SAMBO [*still dreaming*]. U-m-m-m, I do b'lieve dat I smells possum.

[Last boy to go by takes gun from SAMBO, then aims it at door, pointing barrel outside, while someone outside throws a torpedo.]

SAMBO [jumping to feet in great excitement]. He'p, mur-
der, I'se shot, I'se killed! Oh, golly, dem derned boys!

CURTAIN

THE CENSUS TAKER

CHARACTERS

THE CENSUS TAKER, *Patient to a degree*
THE WOMAN, *A good talker but evasive*

Discovered: WOMAN seated with paper or needlework in her hands. Knock is heard at door. WOMAN rises, goes to door.

WOMAN [*opening door*]. Come right in, and make yerself at home. If ye ain't at home, I guess ye orter be.

Enter CENSUS TAKER carrying sheaf of blanks in folio

CENSUS TAKER. Good morning, ma'am.

WOMAN. Good morning, yerself.

CENSUS TAKER. Are you the lady of the house?

WOMAN. Well, now, do I look like the lady of a barn?

CENSUS TAKER. I mean, are you the head, or one of the heads, of a family living here?

WOMAN. If the fam'ly's got any head, I'm it. John wouldn't make a decent heel, much less a head.

CENSUS TAKER. Ah, I see, then. You have a husband. May I ask where he is?

WOMAN. Shure, ast all ye want to. But it's small chance ye'll have o' findin' out from me. It's what I'd like to know meself.

CENSUS TAKER. Oh, well, then, I'll proceed with you. Never mind your husband. [Sits.]

WOMAN. Don't worry, I don't. [Sits.]

CENSUS TAKER [*takes out pencil and pad of paper*]. I would rather have found your husband, as I have come to take the census of this family.

WOMAN. You wouldn't 'a' got 'em from him.

CENSUS TAKER. Why not?

WOMAN. Because he ain't got none of 'is own t' give away, much less any fer th' fam'ly.

CENSUS TAKER. No, no, not that. I've come to ask some questions—

WOMAN [*interrupting*]. I see ye have.

CENSUS TAKER. I have been sent here by the Government.

WOMAN. Is the Gover'ment sick?

CENSUS TAKER. Of course not. It couldn't be. Why do you ask such silly questions?

WOMAN. Well, you said the Gover'ment sent you here, so I thought it must 'a' been in a shape that it couldn't come itself, or it wouldn't a-sent such a prospec' as you.

CENSUS TAKER. You are mighty dense. I represent the Government and I have authority to ask questions and compel people to answer me. [*Irritably takes purse from pocket and starts to produce card.*] Do you see this? This is my badge of authority.

WOMAN. That's all right, then. Blaze away with yer questions.

CENSUS TAKER. To begin with, what is your surname? [*Prepares to write.*]

WOMAN. Ain't got any.

CENSUS TAKER. Why, you surely have.

WOMAN. Why, I surely ain't.

CENSUS TAKER. Have no surname? First time I ever heard of anything like that. Why haven't you?

WOMAN. Why, because I ain't a *sir*, that's why.

CENSUS TAKER. What is your name?

WOMAN. Sairy.

CENSUS TAKER. Sarah, I suppose. What is your other name?

WOMAN. Jane.

CENSUS TAKER. Your last name?

WOMAN. My last name wuz Baker.

CENSUS TAKER. It seems mighty hard for you to understand. What name is on your letters, when you get any?

WOMAN. Why mine, of course.

CENSUS TAKER. Great Caesar's ghost! Can you show me one of your letters?

WOMAN. Why, no, sir, I won't show you one of my let-

ters. I'm no fool. You ain't got no business readin' my mail.

CENSUS TAKER. I just wanted to see the name on the envelope. Your full name.

WOMAN. I don't ever git in any such condition meself.

Ye must be thinkin' 'bout John. He gets full purty often.

CENSUS TAKER. What is *all* of your name?

WOMAN. Sairy Jane Bond.

CENSUS TAKER. So much, so good. Now, how many people live here?

WOMAN. All of us live here but Grace. She lives in—

CENSUS TAKER [*interrupting*]. Never mind about Grace.

How many live here? Eat here, sleep here, and so on?

WOMAN. Well, now, if you come down to that, John hardly ever eats a meal at home. He lays out somethin' scan'lous.

CENSUS TAKER. Well, how many sleep here? How many slept here last night?

WOMAN. The baby wuz cross an' kep' us all awake las' night.

CENSUS TAKER. I never saw anyone more dense.

WOMAN. Well, I have seen plenty with more'n I've got. But it don't become you none to make remarks about dents that I cain't help. If you had smallpox as bad as I did, I guess you'd have some dents too.

CENSUS TAKER [*aside*]. I see she has six plates set out. I'll put down four children. [To WOMAN]. How old is your husband?

WOMAN. He's—le's see—he's three years older'n me.

CENSUS TAKER. Well, how old are you?

WOMAN. Why, your head is mighty thick. I'm three years younger'n John.

CENSUS TAKER. No more foolishness now! How many years old are you?

WOMAN. Why, I'm 39.

CENSUS TAKER. Then John is 42.

WOMAN. He acts like he's a hunderd, when they's any

work to be done; but let 'im see a purty girl on the streets, and he's not more'n 20.

CENSUS TAKER. What is his occupation?

WOMAN. I dunno.

CENSUS TAKER. I mean, what does he do all of the time?

WOMAN. Oh—he comes in home drunk.

CENSUS TAKER. No. What does he depend upon for a livelihood? In your slang expression, what does he hang onto?

WOMAN. Well, one day, he hung onto a circus wagon and it carried him plum out of town.

CENSUS TAKER. Won't you be sensible?

WOMAN. Will, if you will.

CENSUS TAKER. Well, I want you to tell me what your husband does for a living—what sort of work?

WOMAN. Why, didn't ye say work in th' first place, 'stead o' so many big words?

CENSUS TAKER. Are you going to tell me what your husband does?

WOMAN. Why, sure. You know the feller that comes along with a hammer when a train stops, an' taps on th' axles?

[*Man nods.*] Well, John, he helps 'im listen.

CENSUS TAKER. I won't waste any more time on you, if your census report never goes in. [Rises hastily and crosses to door.] Good day, ma'am. [Exit.]

WOMAN. Good day, yerself an' may ye never come back here agin with yer ignorance an' ill manners. [To audience.] The idee of a man like that takin' th' Gover'ment's place, anyhow!

CURTAIN

POOR TEACHER

CHARACTERS

LOUIS, *Substitute teacher*
ELSIE, *His best friend*

TOM, JACK, PAUL, THEODORE, BESS } *Pupils*
MAGGIE, FRITZ, ESTHER, LOIS, SUE }

Discovered: Boys and Girls around teacher's desk

TOM. Did anyone get the first problem on page 176?

JACK. Well, I didn't get it, but father worked it for me.

BESS. I got it—you multiply the $72\frac{1}{2}$ by—

Enter SUE excitedly

SUE. Gee whiz, kids! Guess what's gonna' happen.
Teacher is sick and can't come to school today.

PAUL. Whee-ee-ee! We'll go fishin'.

SUE. Oh, no, my big brother is going to take her place.

TOM. Gee, but we'll have fun now.

BESS. Oh, I don't see why. I'm going to be as good as
I can.

JACK. Well, I'm not. You all just watch me. I bet I
make things hot here today.

BESS. I hope things do get hot—for you.

SUE. Well, I can tell all of you that my brother Louis
won't stand for any foolishness. He'd just as soon spank
me as not.

LOIS. Here he comes now, with Elsie Ferguson.

JACK. Oh, I guess she'll be teacher's pet today. He's plum
mashed on her.

Enter LOUIS and ELSIE. Pupils all bow low

ALL. Good morning, teacher.

LOUIS. Good morning to all of you; but you don't need
to be so sarcastic.

TOM. Oh, we're not sour catsup, at all. We wanted to be nice to you.

ELSIE. I don't see why you boys and girls want to act so cute.

JACK. We thought we'd have to act cute, since we have such a cute teacher and he has such a cute friend.

LOUIS. Well, you needn't worry, Jack. You're not cute and you never will be.

Enter MAGGIE and ESTHER as he finishes

MAGGIE. Well, I wouldn't want to be cute. Mamma says that cute really means bow-legged.

ESTHER. And papa says that anybody that is cute is not fit for anything else.

ELSIE. I think you folks are all mean to say anything like that.

LOUIS. Oh, never mind them, Elsie. They don't know any better.

Enter FRITZ FERGUSON in a rush; bumps LOUIS

FRITZ. Sure thought I was gonna' be late.

LOUIS. Watch where you are going there, Fritz Ferguson.

FRITZ [*bows extravagantly*]. Oh, excuse me. I musta gotcha bumpus. [*Others all laugh.*]

Enter PHYLLIS

MAGGIE. Oh, come here, Phyllis. I have something to tell you.

PHYLLIS. Well, tell it quick. [*The two go to one side and whisper.*]

JACK. I'll just see what they say. [*Tiptoes to girls and pokes in his head, only to be bumped by their elbows as they turn away.*]

BESS. Well, what did they say, Jack?

LOIS. I think they said that there'd be hot times in the old town tonight.

TOM. I guess Jack thinks it's hot times right now.

LOUIS [*raps on desk*]. Listen to me, now. I want all of you to do your best today; your very, very best.

PHYLLIS. Oh, we'll do that all right, all right. Don't worry.

LOUIS. The reason that I'm telling you this is that the new superintendent is coming here today to visit the school.

FRITZ. Listen, kids. He said some blue soup and tin dumpers was coming.

ELSIE. Louis didn't say anything about blue soup.

PAUL. Aw, shut up, Elsie. What do you know about machinery? You can't even roll a wheelbarrow.

LOIS. Why, is a wheelbarrow machinery?

JACK. Why, sure. It's got wheels on it. Didn't you ever hear about the wheels of machinery?

LOIS. I be-lie-ve I have.

MAGGIE. He's trying to string you, Lois. Don't pay any attention to him.

JACK. Oh, no, I wouldn't do that, at all.

TOM. But Mister Jack Long, though he knew it was wrong, Tried listening what other folks said.

So he walked on his toes, and put in his nose,
But all he got was a punch in the head.

BESS. Why, Tom, you ought to be a poet.

ESTHER. He knows how to shut Jack up well enough.

LOUIS. It is now time to begin with the lessons. You may all take your seats.

FRITZ. Where to?

LOUIS [*glares at FRITZ*]. You know what I mean. Sit down. [Everyone scrambles about to get a seat. PAUL, shoved by JACK, falls on the floor.]

LOUIS. What do you mean, young man?

PAUL. Well, I meant to sit down on that seat there, but Jack shoved me and I missed my aim.

SUE. No, teacher, Jack didn't either. He fell off.

PAUL. Yes, but Jack pushed me.

LOUIS [*in fierce voice*]. Jack!

JACK. Ma'am?

LOUIS. Don't say ma'am to me. Come up here. [JACK slowly goes up.]

BESS [fidgeting]. Oh, Jack is going to get a whipping and it always makes me nervous to see anyone get whipped.

[LOUIS takes stick and looks angrily at JACK.]

JACK [sheepishly]. Say, teacher, would you whip a boy for something he didn't do?

LOUIS. Why, no.

JACK. Well, don't whip me, then, for I didn't let Paul sit down by me.

LOUIS [begins to smile]. Well, you're pretty clever. Guess I'll have to let you off this time. [JACK goes back, winking at others.]

Enter THEODORE

THEODORE. Say, ain't we gonna have no school? Where's the teacher? [Pupils sign to him and point to LOUIS.]

THEODORE. Oh, is that it?

LOUIS. Go to your seat, Theodore Hoffman, and behave yourself, or I'll show you whether I'm it or not. (THEODORE starts to seat, but stumbles over some one's foot and falls. LOUIS grabs him by the collar and begins to use stick on him.)

THEODORE. Wow, wow! That'll do. You're it, all right.

LOUIS. Now you folks had just as well begin to understand that I'm going to be boss here today. Don't suppose for a minute that I will put up with any more of your nonsense.

FRITZ. We don't suppose you will. But will you suppose something with me?

LOUIS. Yes, go ahead.

FRITZ. Well, suppose that my foot was your grandmother. Can you suppose that?

LOUIS. Well, I suppose so. Then what?

FRITZ. And suppose that you were going away. Would you kiss your grandmother good-bye?

LOUIS. Why, I suppose I would.

FRITZ. Then you suppose that you would kiss my foot.

[*All laugh.*]

[*Tom then brings his book up to Louis and points to a word.*]

TOM. What's that word, please?

LOUIS. Which word are you pointing to?

TOM. Promiscuous. [*Louis glares at Tom.*] [Tom returns to his seat sheepishly.]

TOM. Oh, I forgot.

LOUIS. I don't want any more of your monkeyshines, Tom.

Close your books, everybody. We are going to have a general review.

THEODORE. General who?

ESTHER. He said that he was going to ginger you up.

THEODORE. No-o-o-o, not me.

LOUIS. Phyllis, tell me what is an island.

PHYLLIS. An island? Why, an island is a wart on the face of the ocean.

[*Tom waves his hand and snaps his fingers.*]

LOUIS. What is it, Tom?

TOM. Can I get a drink?

LOUIS. No. Fritz, what is a mountain?

FRITZ. A mountain is a body of land that is higher than the other land and is entirely surrounded by trees and wild animals.

JACK. No, a mountain is a pimple on the face of the earth.

ELSIE. And grass is the whiskers on the earth's face.

LOUIS. Elsie, you know better than that. I didn't think that you would act this way.

ELSIE. Well, the others answered that way and you didn't care for them, so I didn't suppose you cared for me.

LOUIS. But I do care for you, too.

MAGGIE. Oh, teacher cares for Elsie. Elsie and teacher! Elsie and teacher! [*Tom waves hand again.*]

LOUIS. What do you want, Tom?

TOM. *May I get a drink?*

LOUIS. *No.* Sue, you may spell quiet and make a sentence with it.

SUE. Q-u-i-e-t, quiet. Papa said that one night when we stayed in a hotel in Oklahoma City, it was so quiet he could hear the bed tick.

PAUL. All who believe that stand on their head.

LOIS. Why, that's nothing. Sometimes it gets so quiet at our house that Pa's foot goes to sleep.

LOUIS. That will do, I guess. Theodore, spell *garden*.

THEODORE [*huskily*]. Garden, g-a-r-d-e-n, garden.

LOUIS. What makes you talk like that, Theodore?

THEODORE. Well, I've got a frog in my throat and it makes me croak.

[TOM waves hand again.]

LOUIS. Tom, who are you waving at?

TOM. You, I guess.

LOUIS. What do you want now?

TOM. I still want a drink.

LOUIS. I've told you no, twice. Why do you keep asking?

TOM. Because if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

LOUIS. Go get your drink. [TOM goes to bucket.]

TOM. The bucket is empty. May I go get some water?

LOUIS. Yes, go on. Now, Jack, I want you to spell *clock*, and tell something about the different kinds.

JACK. C-l-o-c-k, clock. There are several kinds of clocks. There was the big, old-fashioned mantel clock that looked like a medicine chest, and now we have little clocks that look like tin cans. When Pa went to see Ma, one of these big old clocks sat up on the mantel and said, "Take-time—take-time." But nowadays when a fellow goes to see his best girl, one of these little tin can clocks sets up somewhere and says, "Get there—get there—get there—get there," so fast you don't know what to do. [Imitates as well as possible the sound of a small alarm clock.]

LOUIS. Paul, I want you to begin now and prepare an

essay. Use any subject you may choose. Maggie, what is the longest word you know?

MAGGIE. Smiles.

BESS. Why, that has only six letter in it.

MAGGIE. Yes, but there's a mile between the first and the last.

LOUIS. Lois, spell gladiator.

LOIS. Gladiator, g-l-a-d-i-a-t-o-r, gladiator. That's what the cannibal said when he ate up his mother-in-law.

LOUIS. Paul, you may read your essay now, if you have it ready.

PAUL [*comes to the front and reads from paper*]. "Subject: Teachers. There are many kinds of teachers. There are fat teachers, slim teachers, long teachers, short teachers, big teachers, little teachers, sweet teachers, sour teachers, smart teachers, dull teachers, black teachers, white teachers, good teachers, bad teachers and teachers who are really not teachers at all, but just think they are teachers."

[*TOM comes in during PAUL's reading and sets water down; then takes dipper, fills mouth with water, but appears to become so interested in the reading that he forgets to swallow. At last he becomes so tickled that he laughs out, blowing water out of his mouth in a fine spray as he does so.*]

LOUIS. What do you mean by such an insinuation?

PAUL. Nothing at all.

LOUIS. Yes, you did. Come here, sir. [PAUL comes hesitatingly to him. LOUIS grabs PAUL's hand and makes a very comical business of trying to whip him, as PAUL jumps about and sags in his legs at the knee each time the switch descends.]

CURTAIN

At the conclusion a short program may be given if desired. The numbers should be old fashioned and rendered in sing-song style.

THE KITCHEN CONVENTION

CHARACTERS

TABLECLOTH, *Boy wrapped in table linen or sheet*
HUMPTY DUMPTY, *Boy wearing clown suit or equivalent*
DISH RAG, *Girl in ragged and soiled dress—tow cloth or burlap is excellent*
CATSUP, *Girl in long, flaring, red paper dress*
WASH BASIN, *Girl in cardboard imitation of basin*
SALT AND PEPPER TWINS, *Two small girls dressed in gray paper or percale bloomer suits with caps to match*
DISH, *Girl in paper imitation of dish*
MATCH, *Boy in white tights with red cap*
TOOTHBRUSH, *Girl in white carrying a large mop or brush of some sort painted to represent a toothbrush*
FORK, *Girl carrying a hay or garden fork wrapped with crepe paper or gilded with aluminum paint*

Enter TABLECLOTH. Sees sign upon the wall

TABLECLOTH. I wonder what this can be. Oh, a meeting of all the kitchen and dining-room people in the kitchen tonight. Everyone asked to turn out. Well, I've been turned so many times lately that I'm dizzy, but I suppose I can make this turn without any serious trouble.

Enter HUMPTY DUMPTY singing

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Hey bum de diddle dum,
Hey bum de leary,
Hey bum de diddle de, oh.

TABLECLOTH. Why, Humpty, you must be happy.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Always address me by my full name, please. Humpty Dumpty.

TABLECLOTH. Must I say, "Sat on a wall," too?

HUMPTY DUMPTY. No. I don't sit on a wall and I didn't catch any fall, either.

TABLECLOTH. But you did in the book.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. I never was in a book. I—

Enter DISH RAG and WASH BASIN

DISH RAG [*interrupting HUMPTY*]. What's the matter in here? Can't you people find anything to do but quarrel? You are just like humans—always chewing on me. I'm the rag, you know.

WASH BASIN. Do be quiet, friends. I hear some one else coming. It might be some stranger who would think us most uncivilized, indeed, if we keep on the rub with each other all of the time.

Enter CATSUP, leading the SALT AND PEPPER TWINS

CATSUP. Here, look whom I found outside crying.

HUMPTY. Well, Catsup, we're glad that you came. But why are these little people crying?

SALT. Well, you see, we are the Salt and Pepper Twins and no one can ever tell us apart without shaking us, so that it is very disagreeable, you must admit.

PEPPER. And sometimes they push us over just for the fun of seeing us jump back up again. It's trying, I must say.

DISH RAG. You ought to be more patient and not allow yourself to be so easily offended. Think of how I am always getting squeezed.

Enter MATCH and DISH, while DISH RAG talks

MATCH. Yes, and some one is always striking me. Of course, I know that I am not exactly a saint and I am willing to admit that I am somewhat of a stick, but still I do not feel that I deserve to be struck and scratched as I am.

TABLECLOTH. Now, if there is to be a troubles meeting, I am glad that I came, for no one gets insulted more than I. Why just think, folks, of having coffee, gravy, soup and anything else that will spill, poured all over your head.

DISH. Yes, yes, we all know about that, but have you

heard the scandal that the boys and girls of the human kingdom are circulating about me? [All shake their heads in the negative.] Well, it has just come to my ears today that they are saying I ran away with my friend, Mr. Spoon. The cup told me about it and I really wanted to Saucer too, but I thought 'twould do no good.

WASH BASIN. Well, well, you people grumble a lot about the boys and girls. I don't see anything so much wrong with them. They hardly ever bother me.

CATSUP. Why, no wonder, Wash. Look who you are.

Enter TOOTHBRUSH

TOOTHBRUSH. They bother me, I can tell you; though not in the way that you might think. I have been told that parents instruct their children to treat us shamefully by putting us in their mouths and cleaning their teeth. But I have never been insulted in that way yet. I do get used for a doll's hairbrush though, and that's what I don't like.

TABLECLOTH. I have this much more to say. I am sick and tired of being used for a pack horse and the very next time that a big load of food is piled on me, I'm going to "rear up."

Enter FORK

FORK. Oh, friends, I need some help. My husband, Knife, is suing me for a divorce and wants to make me "fork" over. I think that it is all because of the fact that when we play any games, I am sharp enough to get some "points," while he is so dull he is jealous. I want you folks all to swear that he is not a good example before children, for he is always "cutting up."

DISH RAG. But my dear Mrs. Fork, you are not so perfect yourself. 'Twas not long ago that I saw you flirting with Mr. Fried Meat and trying to get him "stuck" on you.

FORK. Oh, naturally, Miss Dish Rag. You would stand up for one of your own kind. But you haven't the courage of a flea. The cook "soaks" you in the "solar

plexus" over and over, but you never resent it in the least.

SALT. Well, that's one thing that can never be said of Sister and me.

PEPPER. No, indeed. Although I will confess we are not above taking a tip occasionally.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Oh, let's change the subject. What were you thinking of a minute ago, Miss Toothbrush, when I saw you looking out of the window?

TOOTHBRUSH. Oh, nothing much.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Nothing much? Why, I thought that you were thinking of me.

TOOTHBRUSH. Well, I was. You are nothing much.

MATCH. Dear, dear. If you people keep on spilling so much gas and blowing so much, I am afraid that I will have "to go out."

CATSUP. That would be too bad indeed. Suppose we all spend some of our surplus energy in singing a song.

ALL. Very well, let's do.

[*All form a circle and sing the following song to the tune of "Music Everywhere*"]:*

Oh, the kitchen people are very jolly,
They laugh and talk and sing,
And they cut their capers
While the folks are reading papers,
For that's the very thing.
And ev'ry night when the moon is bright
You may hear their voices ring.
[Repeat two last lines.]

But the knife and fork and tablespoon,
And the cup and saucer, too,
One night were feeling blue.
Felt so bad, ah! each one had

*Music in MERRY MELODIES song book. Price 20 cents.

A pain that hurt like all pains do.
The saucer said he felt quite looney;
The others said, "Oh, no, you're pruney."
[Repeat two last lines.]

Then they called the doctor in
And he looked just like sin,
Saying, "What can I do for you?"
They said, "Oh, listen, Doctor Dub,
Can't you pull us through the rub?
The knife and fork and tablespoon
Were prancing around like cataleptics.
The folks all said they were dyspeptics,
And the cup and saucer, too.

CURTAIN

AFRICAN JUSTICE

CHARACTERS

JEDGE SOLUMFACE, *A dry jurist*

SHERIFF JOHNSONGRASS, *Who likes chicken*

RASTUS FUSSFEATHERS }
SULLIVAN HOTFOOT } *The accused*

GAMALIEL SOAPSUDS }
TROMBONE THICKLIPS } *Witnesses*
CORNELIUS BONEHEAD }

FIRST COON }
DRUNKEN COON } *Spectators who produce a surprise*

Enter JEDGE SOLUMFACE. Looks about suspiciously

JEDGE. Who sed dey wuz gwine hev a program heah to-night? Don' looks to me lak no program. Anyhow dey kin jes' wait till we disposes uv de Co't docket on han'. [Looks all about again.] But befo' I stahts dat bizness, guess I bettah hev a little innard reinforcement. [Takes long bottle slowly out of inside pocket which appears to be empty until entirely out of pocket, when it is seen to contain a swallow or two of milk. He holds bottle up before him, shakes it, then drinks.]

Enter SHERIFF

SHERIFF. Mawnin', yo honah. What is yo' wants me to do?

JEDGE. Fetch in Rastus Fussfeathahs an' Sullivan Hotfoot; den go denounce outside dat Co't am injined.

SHERIFF. Yas, sah. I'se gwine dis minit. [Exit.]

JEDGE [has been holding bottle behind him all this time; now produces it again]. It sho am gittin' to wheah dey ain't no privacy ob public officials. Heah de Sheriff jes' walks in on me 'thout no warnin' a-tall. Nex' thing nobody knows, he'll be watchin' me cut off mah toe-nails.

[JEDGE drinks again as FIRST COON enters.]

JEDGE. Hey, niggah!

FIRST COON. Hey, yo'se'f. I ain' no cow.

JEDGE. Anybody c'd tell dat by yo' complexion. But what does yo' want?

FIRST COON. I'se jes' come heah to be a *spec-tator*.

JEDGE. Oh, yo' wants to be a speckled 'tater. All right den, speckle yo'se'f out dar on dat bench an ack lak youse growed dar, ef yo' don' wants ter git peeled—me bein' de peeler.

[*Reënter SHERIFF with prisoners, RASTUS and SULLIVAN.*]

SHERIFF. It is my pleasuah, yo' honah, to present to yo' dese culprits.

RASTUS. Yo' honah, I ain' no mo' culprit dan de Sheriff are. An' ef he fools wid me, I'll tell how come his wife cooks chicken so much.

SHERIFF. Shet yo' black mouf, yo' insinuatin' scalawag, befo' I inspects yo' inside wid a Barlow.

SULLIVAN. Yo' honah, I begs to ask to deman' dat yo' stop dis heah sputification. Ise nervous an' high strung an' it goes again my digestion.

JEDGE. Silence dar, yo' black lim's o' Satan, befo' I ordahs yo' shins busted. Mistah Sheriff, depose de pris'nahs at de bar.

SULLIVAN. Ef I evah gains my freedom, Ise gwine to depose de guy dat tu'ned me in on dis chawge.

FIRST COON. I hopes dey nevah lets de sun shine no mo' on dat lugubrious count'nance o' youahs.

JEDGE [*pounds desk*]. Dis omnificent body will now come to ordah an' Co't perceedin's will fothwith promulgate.

RASTUS. Yas, if I evah kotches yo' out widout yo' razoh, Ise gwine ter promulgate hostilities an' de consanction will be carnivorous.

SHERIFF. Silence dar, Rastus Fussfethahs, befo' I visits my anger on yo' impertinence.

JEDGE. Call in de witnesses now.

SHERIFF [*goes to one side*]. Cornelius Bonehead, Trombone Thicklips, an' Gamaliel Soapsuds, come to Co't.

[*Enter three above.*]

JEDGE. De pris'nahs will now rise an' heah de chahges ag'ininst dem read.

RASTUS. I ain' tiahd a-settin' yit.

SULLIVAN. Ise not gwine-a rise unless dis coon does rise too.

CORNELIUS [*points to SULLIVAN*]. Dat's de niggah dar what started de fracas.

TROMBONE. No sah, Jedge, dat coon ain' dun nuthin'. 'Twuz de odern.

GAMALIEL. Yo' honah, I don't believes dey's neithah one dun nuthin'. De Sheriff jes' come an' 'rested dese boys to show his 'thority.

SHERIFF. Look heah, Gamaliel Soapsuds, does yo' know who yousè talkin' 'bout? [*Approaches GAMALIEL threateningly.*]

GAMALIEL [*standing his ground*]. Betcha life, Jim John-songgrass. Ise now lookin' in de face uv one de mos' wuthless an' unnecessary sheriffs in de state.

JEDGE [*rises and pounds desk*]. Look heah, youse guys. Who does yo' think am a-runnin' dis Co't? I wants all uv ye ter know dat Ise de mos' hon'able an cantankerous Jedge Solumface an' what I says goes. [*Pulls out a huge razor and flourishes it about.*] Mistah Sheriff an' Witnesses, set down. Pris'nahs rise. [*All do as commanded.*] Now den, Ise gwine read de chahges in dis case an' I wants attenshun while I does it. [*Comical business of taking out of pocket glasses wrapped in red bandana and adjusting them to end of nose.*]

JEDGE [*reads*]. Befo' me, Jedge Solumface, a mos' duly pintaed an' cantankerous magistrate, appeahs one John Rutledge an' makes apple gravy dat two miscreants, namely, an' to wit, Sullivan Hotfoot and Rastus Fuss-feathahs, did engage in one fistic fight or combat an' did then an' thereby distuhb the sleep an' slumbah of said John Rutledge. [*Pause*] Ye heahs de chahges. What has yo' all got to say?

RASTUS. Yo' honah, may I plead my own case?

JEDGE. I s'pose so.

RASTUS. Well, den' I pleads not guilty. It am a true fac', how-some-ever, dat dis niggah heah [*indicates SULLIVAN*] did git on a spree an' try to teah up de town.

SHERIFF. Sullivan Hotfoot, what has yo' got to say?

SULLIVAN. I jes' has to say, dat niggah am de bigges' liah in captivity. He's de one hisself dat got drunk.

RASTUS [*raises fist*]. I ain' no liah, ye bullet-eyed baboon. I'll knock a bump on yo' haid dat'll make Pike's Peak look like a tater-hill.

SULLIVAN. Niggah, ef yo' comes one step closah to me, Ise gwine separate yo' gizzahd from yo' black body.

CORNELIUS [*pulls out razor and climbs onto seat*]. Let 'em go, boys. Ise ready to make shredded wheat outa de fust one dat comes dis way.

TROMBONE. Say, coon, am dat razoh youse got dar fo' yo'se'f?

CORNELIUS. No, sah, it's fo' mah frien's.

JEDGE. Ordah! Ordah! Is yo' all tryin' to show yo' contempt fo' dis Co't?

GAMALIEL. No, sah, Ise been tryin' to hide mine all de time.

[Enter DRUNKEN COON, with a cap pistol in each hand.]

DRUNKEN COON. Set down an' shet up! [All sit down and become quiet.] Now Ise gwine take a little nap. Don' nobody distuhb me. [Sits on front seat, and nods to and fro.]

JEDGE. What does yo' mean, dar, niggah, comin' in heah an' distuhbin' us wid yo' intoxication? [No reply from DRUNKEN COON, who bends low and manages to get his mouth full of water from a concealed bottle.]

SHERIFF [approaches DRUNKEN COON]. Why don' yo' answer de Jedge when he axes yo' somepin? [A grunt.] Am yo' deef an' dum? [Punches DRUNKEN COON.]

JEDGE. Now look heah, niggah. What made yo' come in heah so late?

DRUNKEN COON. Well, sah, as I wuz on my way heah, I saw a dog cross de road aftah a polecat. I waited to see de outcome. [Pause.]

GAMALIEL. Well, what wuz de outcome?

DRUNKEN COON. It wuz awful.

FIRST COON. Did de dog ketch de polecat?

DRUNKEN COON. No, but he got his results just de same.

JUDGE [*laughs heartily*]. Dat's one good 'n' on yo' all.

Jes' fo' dat, I ain' gwine fine yo' fo' drunkenness. But we'll hab ter perseed wid de trial. Trombone Thicklips, come heah an' let me swear yo' in.

TROMBONE. Say, looka heah, Mistah Jedge, don' yo' go ter swearin' at *me* now, less'n I fergits who yo' is an' whar Ise at.

FIRST COON. Yo' ignorant fool, he wants yo' ter take de oath ob trufe.

TROMBONE. All right den. I'll take anyt'ing dey is to give away.

JUDGE. Raise yo' right han's, all tree ob yo' witnesses, an' I'll swear all ob yo' at wunce. [*All three do as directed.*]

JUDGE. Does yo' all solumly swear an' affirm dat all yo' uns says in dis case will be de truf, and nuthin' but de truf, and any lies what yo' says will be trufeful lies?

TROMBONE. I does.

GAMALIEL. Same heah.

CORNELIUS. Me, too.

JUDGE. Well, den, Mistah Soapsuds, will yo' please tell de Co't jes' what happened in dis mattah?

GAMALIEL. Dey wuzn't nuthin' happened, Jedge. Dis heah is all a frame-up. John Rutledge an' de Sheriff don' lak dose two boys, so dey hired Trombone and Cornelius to swear a pack o' lies so's dey c'd git a little somepin outa de bizness deirselves.

SHERIFF. Dat am a black lie.

GAMALIEL. Yo' honah, I kin prove evah wohd dat I says.

SHERIFF. Make 'im prove it. But Ise got bizness outside.

[*Exit.*]

GAMALIEL. Aw right, den, I calls on dese two boys heah [*points to FIRST COON and DRUNKEN COON*] to groberate wat I says.

FIRST COON. Dat's all a fac', Jedge. Dese two fellahs heah am bofe peaceful an' God-fearin' citizens dat nevah bothahs nobody.

DRUNKEN COON. Amen, sez I. Yo' all thought dat I wuz drunk, didn't yo'? Well, I warn't drunk a-tall. I jes' wanted ter see how things wuz movin' 'long an' have a little fun.

JEDGE. De evidence bein' purty straight dat de Sheriff am crooked, him bein' afeard to stan' an' face de music, as it were, I feels lak he am de one dat stan's in need ob punishment, so it am de ordah ob dis Co't dat we all go down to Sheriff Johnsongrass's house an eat up all o' his fried chicken.

[*All rush out amid cries of "Amen!" "Dat's de way to speak," etc.*]

CURTAIN

THREE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

CHARACTERS

FARMER BLIVENS, *Middle-aged*
LON, *Hired boy*

COSTUMES

Hayseed clothing for both.

PROPERTIES

Alarm clock, blanket, wash basin, water, soap, bridle.

Discovered: LON asleep on pallet on floor in ridiculous posture, snoring loudly. Some one off stage imitates crowing of rooster. LON sleeps on. Cow bellows, pigs grunt and squeal, horses whinny, etc., all noises of the barnyard possible should be repeated. Through it all LON sleeps soundly, snoring all the while. Presently alarm goes off near his feet. With a single movement of one foot, which has a string tied from toe to alarm "stop," LON quiets the clock.

FARMER BLIVENS [off stage]. Lon-nie! Oh, Lonnie! Git up.

LON [sleepily]. W-e-l-l.

BLIVENS. I mean it. Git up.

LON. Awri-i.

[LON makes no effort to rise, so BLIVENS jerks on cord from outside which strips cover from LON.]

LON. Ding gone it, anyway! Where's my hat? [Jumps up.] I want my hat. Dad blast it, I want it right now, too. There it is. The goll derned dog's been on it. Now ef that don't jest beat a hen a-peckin' with a wooden bill. [Slaps hat against leg, then pulls it down over his ears.] An' I had a extry clean sock some'rs about here, too.

Bet I cain't find that now. A feller's clo'es ain't tuck no keer uv by people that don't keer nuthin' about 'im. They ain't nobody keers nuthin' about a hired han' 'cept to work 'im like a dog. Now there wuz that checkedy strip-ed shirt o' mine—plum good, too, 'cept fer a split or two down th' back an' one sleeve tore off. But do I git it fixed up so's I kin wear it agin, by Ole Missis Blivens? No, I don't. She patched th' ole man's night shirt with it.

[*LON starts off right and bumps into BLIVENS, who is entering.*]

BLIVENS. U-m-m. You hard-headed ram! You knocked th' wind clean out uv me.

LON. I don't keer ef I did. Lemme by, will ye?

BLIVENS. By? Where you goin'?

LON. I'm a-gonna go see ef I cain't find some place t' stay all night.

BLIVENS. Stay all night?

LON. Yes, stay all night. Not jest part uv th' night, like you want a feller t' do.

BLIVENS. You go gather yore gran'ma's green grapes. You've slep' fer th' las' twelve hours. Why, you simlin head, it'll soon be daylight. You hustle yorese'f out to th' barn an' put th' harness on that pony—th' ole woman wants t' drive over t' th' post office after breakfas'.

LON. Well, I'm a-goin' too, ef she does.

BLIVENS. Why, I don't guess you are.

LON. Well, I guess *I are*. Ef she goes over there after her breakfas', I'm a-goin' after mine. I'm purt' nigh starved t' death right now.

BLIVENS. You thick-headed numskull—she ain't a-goin' over there t' *git* her breakfas'—she's a-goin' *after* breakfas'.

LON. Well, what's th' difference 'tween goin' t' *git* anything, an' goin' *after* anything?

BLIVENS. Yore skull is as thick as a mule's. She's goin' when breakfas' is over. Kin you understand that?

LON. Yeah, betcha. Why didn't you say, then, that she wuz goin' *behin'* breakfas', so's anybody'd know what ye meant?

BLIVENS. Behin' breakfas'? How do you git that-away?

LON. Well, ef she wuz t' go now, it'd be before breakfas' wouldn't it?

BLIVENS. Why, of course. But—

LON [interrupting]. No but about it. Ef now's *before* breakfas', when we've et'll be *behin'* breakfas'.

BLIVENS [advancing on Lon]. Git yorese'f outa here an' go harness that pony, before I fergit myse'f an' hurt you. An' don't you put 'em on hin' part before, neither.

LON [at door]. Well, maybe that fool horse'd better not try t' git into 'em wrong end first. [Exit left.]

BLIVENS. That boy is enough t' try th' patience uv a saint an' th' Lord knows I ain't a saint. I never seed his beat in all my born days. It's jes' like pullin' a jaw tooth t' git him t' do anything. Yes, siree, it's a good one-man's job t' keep him straightened out. An' I'll be hornswoggled—I fergot t' tell 'im that th' crumple-horned cow got in th' pony's stall las' night, so I jest let 'er stay an' put th' pony in her stall. Maybe he'll have sense enough t' feel th' horns on 'er head before he gits fur. Like as not, though, th' simlin head'll have ole Brindy hitched t' th' hack before he notices th' difference.

[LON is heard off stage as at a distance.]

LON. Woa there, goll darn ye. Now you better woa here, I say. Woa. Open yer fool mouth an' take in them bits. You've got them jaws set as tight as Ole Man Blivenses pocket book. [Quiet.]

BLIVENS. I guess he musta made it. It's a wonder, though. I'll be gittin' ready fer breakfas' agin he gits back. [Pours water in pan, takes soap in hand and proceeds to make large quantity of lather. He next rolls up his sleeves and washes hands and arms, then bends head over as if to wash face, when LON bursts in at left, bumping BLIVENS into suds head foremost.]

BLIVENS [*straightening up and feeling for towel*]. Gimme
—blub—blub—gimme— [*Sputters and blows suds.*]

LON [*hands him bridle, which he has carried in*]. Here,
take it.

[BLIVENS takes bridle and rubs it over his face, then drops
it so that it falls around his neck.]

BLIVENS. You blasted idiot, hand me th' towel.

LON [does so]. Whyn't you say towel instead of [*imitates*
BLIVENS] "Gimme blub—blub." How's I tq know what
you wanted?

BLIVENS [*wiping face*]. How'd you know anything? What
did ye s'pose I wanted?

LON. Well, I didn't know. You said "gimme" an' I give
ye what I had in my hands.

BLIVENS. You're not fur from a fool.

LON. I know it. 'Bout six feet, I reckin.

BLIVENS. Couldn't you see that my eyes wuz about t' go
out?

LON. Why, you had 'em squinched so I couldn't see where
they wuz a-goin'. But it looked more like they wuz
a-goin' in instead uv out.

BLIVENS. You jest done that fer meanness.

LON. Maybe so, I dun it fer you.

BLIVENS [*notices bridle about his neck and jerks it off*].
What in th' name o' thunder'd you bring this in here fer?

LON. Well, sir, I'll tell ye. It wuz jest natcherally so
ding-busted cold last night that that pony has drawed up
to about ha'f his usual size an' his ears is froze stiffer 'n
a poker, so I couldn't git th' bridle on 'im.

BLIVENS. Why, you loose-lipped lunatic! You've been
out there tryin' t' put th' bridle on a cow.

LON. No, I ain't, neither. I guess I know th' cow stall
from th' horse stall, so you needn't try t' stall me like
that.

BLIVENS. I know. But las' night th' cow got in th' pony's
stall an' th' pony in the cow's stall, so I jest left 'em that
away. I aimed to tell you about it, but I forgot it.

LON. Well, I'll be rim rusted. What ef Missis Blivens had awoke me up 'fore you did and sent me out t' milk?

BLIVENS. That'd a-been funny, wouldn't it?

LON. You bet it would. An' if the calf got in ole Darby's stall—well, we'd 'a' been purty shore of veal fer dinner.

BLIVENS [*hiding a grin with his hand*]. Why, say, Lon, you know I have veal all th' time. Right with me, too, ever'where I go.

LON. Git out, Mr. Blivens. You know better'n t' spect me t' b'lieve that, don't ye?

BLIVENS. Why, no. Ain't I got two ca'ves here. [Points to legs.]

LON. Shore, you got *them* ca'ves.

BLIVENS. Well, don't ca'ves make veal?

LON. Yeah, but who ever heard uv veal fifty years old?

BLIVENS. Oh, you gump head, I wuz jest a-tryin' t' make a little joke out uv part uv my anatomy.

LON. Well, seems t' me like th' Lord made a great big joke outa all yer 'natomy.

[*Female voice is heard off stage at right.*]

VOICE. Breakfas' is ready.

[LON starts to rush off in that direction, but BLIVENS catches him by coat-tail and holds him.]

BLIVENS. Hold on, young man.

LON. Don't look like I need to. You seem t' be doin' enough o' that fer both uv us.

BLIVENS. You wash yer dirty se'f. Why, th' hogs wouldn't eat with you.

LON. They wouldn't git no chance, but I bet they would with you.

BLIVENS. Go ahead, there, an' wash an' don't be all day about it, either. You've got work t' do after breakfas'.

[LON pours out water left by BLIVENS and refills the pan, making a lot of lather. He puts his head down to basin and rubs, slashes and splashes. After much puffing

and snorting he straightens up with his face covered with lather.]

LON. Where's that towel? Confound it, I cain't find it.
[Gropes about for towel.] I'll be dad-squizzled ef my eyes ain't on fire.

[BLIVENS gets towel and comes toward LON.]

BLIVENS. Here's th' towel.

LON reaches for towel and gets hold of it, BLIVENS still holding on to it. A tussle ensues and lather flies.]

LON. Well, turn it a-loose, ole stingy. [With a wrench he grabs towel as BLIVENS ducks to avoid him.]

CURTAIN

THE SINGING-SCHOOL TEACHER

CHARACTERS

SARAH
NANCY
HANNAH } *Three lonely maidens*

Discovered: Three girls seated in rude schoolroom.

SARAH. When do you suppose he'll be here?

NANCY. When he gets here, more than likely.

SARAH. You don't say so, Miss Smarty. Your name ought to be changed to Needles.

NANCY [*innocently*]. Why?

SARAH. Because you are so sharp.

NANCY. Well, then, yours ought to be Buttermilk, because you are so sour.

HANNAH. Girls, girls. Shame on both of you to be so fresh!

NANCY. Well, Hannah Hankins, no one will ever accuse you of that. Why here you are, nearly thirty years old, and hain't had a feller fer three years. If you don't git married purty soon, you'll hafta be salted down forever.

SARAH. Oh, she had Lem Whitesides fer a feller a little while.

HANNAH. Of course, I did.

NANCY. Yes, but he's got a cork leg, so he jest counts a ha'f.

HANNAH. Never min', gals. Wait till th' Singin' Teacher gits here. I reckon I'll show ye who'll shine.

SARAH. Aw, peddle that to somebody else, Hanner. I just bought me a fan t'other day, so I don't need none o' yer wind.

HANNAH. After Zeke Pattengill quit you as cold as he did, don't look like you'd need no fan t' keep cool fer quite a spell.

NANCY. A good shot, Hanner. A good shot. But say, they ain't no use fer us to spile our faces a-quarrelin'

'bout when th' teacher's apt to be here 'most any time now. Let's do try to be pleasant.

HANNAH. An' they's no use fer us to fall out over who gits him, either. He may be as ugly as home-made sin.

SARAH. Oh, but he ain't ugly. Ma seen him th' day he wuz engaged, an' she said he had purty hair an' eyes.

NANCY. Oh, is he engaged?

SARAH. Engaged to teach th' singin' school.

HANNAH. Let 'im be engaged to th' school to begin with, but before it's over with, he'll be engaged to me, if I have my way.

SARAH. Don't be too shore, now, Hanner. He may not keer fer yore baby-doll ways an' angel-faced expression.

NANCY. Angel face's foot. Better say sour dough face. Fer she'd be as freckled as a guinea egg, if it wuzn't fer that flour an' buttermilk she smears on all th' time.

HANNAH. You'd do th' same thing, if you thought it would he'p you any. Guess you've forgot that pasty stuff you bought at th' drug store to take th' wrinkles from aroun' yer eyes, but I hain't. I remember one night you forgot to put it on till you'd done got in bed, too, so you got up in th' dark an' got a-holt uv th' shoe blackin' an' smeared it all over yer face.

NANCY. I didn't do it.

SARAH. Yes, you did, too, Nance. Or at least that's th' news that got out. I remember when it wuz, an' I know fer myse'f that you wuzn't at church th' nex' Sunday.

HANNAH. Oh, looky yonder! [Looks out.] Who is that, I wonder.

SARAH. A man an' a woman with a gang o' kids, looks like.

NANCY. Where? Where? Oh, yes, I see now. My stars, what a bunch! One, two, three, four, five. Five kids an' a baby in arms.

HANNAH. See them song books under th' man's arm. I'll bet that is th' singin' teacher.

NANCY. Well, we're not interested in music then. Let's go.

[All go out hastily.]

CURTAIN

RUS AND GUS

CHARACTERS

RUS, *In desperate mood* GUS, *In moderate despair*

Enter RUS and GUS, backing in stealthily from opposite sides of the stage. Both make exaggerated semblance of looking for some one. At center they bump together, spring apart in alarm and draw weapons on each other. RUS carries a huge club. GUS has a cap pistol.

RUS. Fox trottin' catfish.

GUS. Jumpin' Jehosaphat.

RUS. What you doin' here?

GUS. Well, jes' now, I'm tryin' t' git my heart an' ha'f my liver swallered back down. What you doin'?

RUS. Well, I wuz engaged in th' operation uv burglin' fer a looker.

GUS. You mean lookin' fer a burglar, mebbe.

RUS. Either one. It don't make no difference. You see, a good burglar means bizness when he hol's you up, an' a good looker does, too.

GUS. Yes, an' when a burglar gits next to yuh, you do some fast walkin', but when a keen looker gits next to yuh, you do some fast talkin'.

RUS. You seem to be a man of experience.

GUS. I am. I go over to _____ [*names neighboring town or community*] ever' Saturday night.

RUS. Oh, you do?

GUS. Yeah. That's what they say.

RUS. What do you mean?

GUS. That's what the _____ girls say, "You'll do."

RUS. They orta say, "You'll mildew if you get any staler."

GUS. Well, I guess I've got a right to be stale.

RUS. How come?

GUS. My mamma spoilt me when I wuz a baby.

RUS. You orta be kicked by a jackass an' I've a good mind to do it.

Gus. You're built about right, but don't try it. You might git springhalted in th' effort.

Rus. I might fool you a trip.

Gus. You might git tripped, you fool.

Rus. Aw, c'm on, le's be more sociable. There's no use fer us t' fall out.

Gus. That's what th' fightin' monkeys in th' tree said. But they did.

Rus. Did what, Ignatz?

Gus. What you said, Krazy Kat—fell out.

Rus. But I mean—

Gus. I know you are.

Rus. Let me finish, please. I mean that we orta be frien's. Why, I was just thinkin' of askin' you out to my farm.

Gus. What d'ya wanna wait'll we git out to yer farm fer? Why don't y' ask me now?

Rus. Perhaps I should say, "invite you."

Gus. No, you ain't gonna *invite* me.

Rus. Oh, yes, I'll invite you.

Gus. If you do, I'll leave here on the first freight. I got *invited* once an' I had t' lay out thirty days over it.

Rus. You don't mean *invited*.

Gus. I know what I'm talkin' 'bout, I tell yuh. I wuz invited fer shootin' craps in a pool hall, an' also fer counterfeitin'.

Rus. Not *invited*, you boob—*indicted*. But I'd a never thought uv you bein' a counterfeiter. Tell about it.

Gus. Well, I wuz jes' a-walkin' down th' sidewalk one day an' a Billy Goat butted me off.

Rus. A Billy Goat butted you off? What has that got to do with counterfeitin'?

Gus. Well, a p'liceman come along an' 'rested me fer passin' a bad Bill.

Rus. I see. I see. But to get back to our subject. Are you comin' out to my farm a week?

Gus. No, I may leave it weak, but I'm strong as horseradish now.

Rus. What makes you so strong?

Gus. Diden' I tell yuh I went over t' —— ever' Saturday night?

Rus. Yes, but what has that got to do with makin' you strong?

Gus. Oh, I stay all night an' eat onions fer breakfas'.

Rus. Is that so? Well, I ate breakfas' with a feller in —— one time an' we had corn bread with Bon Ami in it.

Gus. I never heared uv that before. Corn bread with Bon Ami in it. Why man, Bon Ami is cleanin' powder.

Rus. I know it, but don't you know what it says in the Bon Ami ads? That's why they put it in corn bread over in ——.

Gus. What do the Bon Ami ads say?

Rus. It hasn't scratched yet.

Gus. You are hopeless.

Rus. Not when my wife gets a-holt uv me.

Gus. What are you then?

Rus. Then I'm he'pless.

Gus. Pore guy. Does she really mistreat you?

Rus. It's a shame the way she treats me, but she never misses. That remin's me, too—I'd better be goin', I guess. [*Starts off.*]

Gus. No, wait a minute. You are such a famous liar. Stay an' tell one more lie.

Rus. No, I gotta beat it. My wife is dyin' an' I'd started after th' doctor.

Gus [excitedly]. My God, then, man! Go on! I'll run inside an' see if I c'n do anything for her while you're gone. [*Rushes off right.*]

Rus. Let 'im go, let 'im go. He'll be back purty soon.

Gus [reënters hurriedly]. Great Scott, man, your wife ain't in there!

Rus [calmly]. I know it.

Gus [grabbing him excitedly]. Where is she? Why don't you hurry?

Rus. She's over to 'er ma's, I reckin. There's where she started.

GUS. Started? When?

RUS. She went over there to stay, late yesterday ev'nin'.

GUS [*suspiciously*]. Then she ain't dyin'?

RUS. Ain't even sick.

GUS. That's no way to joke.

RUS. Oh, well, you told me to tell you a big lie an' that wuz th' biggest one I c'd think uv.

CURTAIN

A CITY RUBE

CHARACTERS

MOTORIST, *From the city, who wears goggles, gloves, etc.*
Boy, *From the country in overalls and straw hat, carrying a hoe*

Enter MOTORIST from right

MOTORIST. Such a pickle as I am in, anyway! Here I am, lost, nobody knows how far from home, tired, half starved and with the car stalled in the mud. I'll never get this far from the main road again. Looks as though I might have the *pleasure [sarcastically]* of remaining over night among the natives. *[Looks off stage at left.]* I see a young Hill-Billy going yonder. He might be able to help me in some way. *[Calls.]* Hey, Rube! Can you help me out of this mud?

Enter Boy from left, carrying hoe across shoulder

Boy [*curiously*]. How did ye know my name wuz Rube?

MOTORIST. Oh, I suppose I must have guessed it.

Boy [*turning away*]. Well, then, bein's ye're so smart—guess yer way outa that mud hole, then.

MOTORIST. Oh, no, don't go. I didn't mean any harm by what I said.

Boy. Course not. You city fellers never mean no harm to us country ducks, but it's awful funny to git a laugh on us, ain't it?

MOTORIST [*in mocking tone*]. Really, I'm so sorry.

Boy [*surveying him from head to foot*]. Well, ye shore look it.

MOTORIST. Forgive me, my beauty.

Boy. Fool with me much more an' I'll give ye my *bootie.* *[Draws foot back as if to kick.]*

MOTORIST. But stay one moment. Tell me something.

Boy. Ain't I told ye enough? Ef I ain't, I c'n shore tell ye some more, ye wall-eyed, knock-kneed, banner-shanked, pigeon-toed, bow-legged son of a stuffed monkey.

MOTORIST. I have lost my directions.

Boy. Lost yer directions?

MOTORIST. Yes. Lost East and West and North and South.

Boy. Well, I declare. I never knowed they wuz yourn.

MOTORIST. Tell me, how far is it to Evanston?

Boy. I dunno.

MOTORIST. Well, how far to Dodgeville? I came through there this evening.

Boy. I dunno.

MOTORIST. We surely can't be far from Waterburg. How far is that?

Boy. I dunno.

MOTORIST [impatiently]. Say, young man, you surely don't know very much, do you?

Boy. Mebbe not, but I ain't lost.

MOTORIST. Perhaps you could help me fix my car. [Looking off at right.] It is not running exactly as it should.

Boy [looks, too]. I see it ain't.

MOTORIST. Do you know anything about engines?

Boy. You bet. Pop has got a book about 'em. Me an' Bud, we looks at it all the time when we ain't busy.

MOTORIST. That sounds interesting. If I had that book, now, I might be able to determine the cause of the trouble with my car and fix it. Has the book any pictures of engines in it?

Boy. You bet it has. It's got one picture where they're gonna burn a white man to the stake.

MOTORIST [exasperated]. Oh, I'm talking about *gas* engines.

Boy. Well, these here Injuns wuz C'manches an' I bet they're wuss'n Gasses any ole day.

MOTORIST. I had reference to motors, my lad, not Indians. Machinery, in other words. Do you understand any kind of machinery?

Boy. Yes, siree. I c'n roll a wheelbarrer.

MOTORIST. I can see very plainly that you are a mechan-

ical genius. Great accomplishments may one day be expected of you. But the reason I mentioned the matter to you is this: As I was driving along this evening, I heard a tinkling sound beneath my car and, upon stopping to investigate, found a piece lying in the road which had evidently dropped from some useful place, as it was worn smooth and bright. I never could find any place for it, however.

BOY. Well, now, stranger, that beats all tarnation. Seems like ef it come off, it ort to go back on some'r's.

MOTORIST. So I have been thinking. Now, it might be that you could replace it.

BOY. Bring th' piece here an' let me see it.

MOTORIST goes out at right

BOY. Now wouldn't it be funny, if I accidentally fixed his ole car?

Reënter MOTORIST with something in a sack

MOTORIST. Here's the piece. I wrapped it in this sack to keep it from getting damaged in any way. [Unwraps plow-point and holds it out.]

BOY. Well, ef anybody ever wuz a Rube, it's yew. Why, yew pore, simple, city saphead, that's a plow-point.

MOTORIST [dumfounded]. Is that so?

BOY. That's shore right, Mister.

MOTORIST. Young man, you have a perfect right to laugh at me, then. But come help me push my car out of the mud, and I will push myself.

BOY. If you'll push on the *car*, I will. 'Twon't do no good to push yerse'f.

MOTORIST. That is what I meant. What time do you suppose it is?

BOY. I dunno.

MOTORIST. Ha, ha, ha. Look down your nose and see.

BOY. Ye better look down your own. Mine ain't grimy.

CURTAIN

PLAYING POLITICS

CHARACTERS

PUG, *Wears a baseball mask. Fierce guy*

FEATHER, *Light character. Has a ball in his hand*

DOOD, *Overdressed*

SKEET, *Another light character, has an old ball glove*

TAG, *Has a bat in his hand*

FRECK, *The politician. Has a glove and wears a ball player's cap*

Discovered: Boys in a group. TAG leans on his bat.

FEATHER repeatedly tosses up ball and catches it. PUG adjusts his mask. SKEET and FRECK, with gloves on left hand, hit into palms of same to make a pocket there with right fists.

PUG. Now, fellers, I'll tell y' plain an' simple, I'm gonna be th' Captun uv this yere Ball Club. I'm th' bigges' one in th' bunch an' th' bes' player, so I reckin I got a right t' be Captun.

FEATHER. You may be th' bigges', awri', Pug, which you are, but you jes' lack a who' lot a-bein' th' bes' player. Who knocks th' mos' home runs? That's what I'd like t' know. Who knocks 'em? It's yer ole uncle over here. That's who. [Taps chest proudly, then sticks thumbs under armpits and strikes an attitude.] I'm th' guy that's allays been th' mos' bennyfit t' this yere team, so I don't think nobody's got a better right t' be th' manager than I have.

DOOD. Yeah, but wait a minit, will ye, Feather? Jes' hol' yer pertate, please. W'en y' go t' talkin' 'bout who's been th' mos' bennyfit to th' team, I reckin I got a right t' say sumpin'. I'd like t' ask all uv ye, who is it spills all th' big league dope I've learnt? Who is it, I say? Yeah, who goes t' all th' big ball games an' watches ever'

move so's I c'n come back here an' tell y' all an' let th' team profit frum th' infymashun? Guess y' all fergot that, ain't ye? But I ain't. I ain't fergot how that cop yanked me down off'n th' fence by th' pants, neither, when I wuz on dooty fer th' team. I reckin I'll hafta be th' Captun.

SKEET. You look like makin' a Captun, Dood Welch. You woulden' make a Captun uv a tin can gang, much less a baseball team. Shore, y' try t' sneak in all th' big ball games at th' park. Ain't nobody denied that. An' I spect y' got yanked by th' britches more'n wunst, too, ef th' truth wuz known; but that's jest th' trouble—ef they's a game on at th' park, we cain't depend on you. W'at do y' keer about our team, then? Nuthin' at all—that's what. Y' gotta see alluv th' big games, regardless o' us. I ain't keerin' who's th' Captun so's it ain't Dood, fellers. Le's, fer cram's sake, not have him.

TAG. Don't worry, we won't. Not less'n we all git sent t' th' 'sylum.

FRECK. Well, fellers, you've all had yer say an' I've lis-sened like a gen'man. I have, ain't I? Cain't nobody say that I interrupted with 'em, while they's statin' the'r case, can they? D'd I bother you, Pug?

PUG. Not's I know uv.

FRECK. D'd I bother you, Feather?

FEATHER. Not me.

FRECK. Did I you, Dood?

DOOD. No, but w'at's that got t' do with it, I'd like to know?

FRECK. Never min'. Jes' wait an' see. Skeet, c'n you say I interrupted with you?

SKEET. Cain't say as I can; but—

FRECK [*interrupting*]. No but about it. I know Tag ain't gonna grum'le. Are y', Tag?

TAG. Not if y' do w'at y' said y' would.

PUG. Tag an' Freck musta framed up somep'n'. Le's not stan' fer it, fellers. I ain't a gonna do it m'se'f.

FRECK. I ain't throo yit.

DOOD. We may not, neither, may we, Pug? [Sidles over to PUG.]

TAG. Y' may be throoer'n y' think y' are. Go on, Freck.

FEATHER. Don't fergit about th' home runs, though.

FRECK. I ain't fergittin' nuthin'. Now looka here, fellers, I been perlite t' y' all, ain't I? [Pauses for answer.] Well, I have' an' here's w'at I got t' say. I'm gonna be Captun an' Tag's gonna be Pitcher.

PUG. Yes, you are, like heck. I'll lick th' stuffin' outa both uv ye. [Starts upon FRECK with fists clenched.]

TAG [holds out bat suddenly, against PUG's stomach]. Hold yer hosses now, Pug. Ain't no reason t' git all fussed up —y' might git mussed up, y' know, an' I reckin yer beauty ain't none too great now, as it is.

PUG [backing a little]. Lay that bat down an' I'll show 'bout somebody's beauty.

DOOD [nervously]. Easy now, Pug, he might git wild an' lay it down on yer head, 'r hit th' wrong one by mistake.

FEATHER [withdrawing a little]. Ain't no use in that rough stuff, fellers. Fightin' ain't playin' baseball.

SKEET. No 'tain't. If it wuz, me'n Feather woulde'n git nowhere. But look how I c'n make 'em curve 'n how Feather c'n swat that li'l ole pill. Brains, fellers, brains: Use 'em if y' got any.

TAG. Gimme my ball, Skeet. [SKEET does so.] Now, w'at'll y' curve? You're sich a Pitcher. Now how're y' t' curve 'em 'thout nuthin' t' curve?

SKEET. Oh, I reckin th' club'll have a ball fer me.

TAG. Has it got ary one now? None but mine. It won't have no more, neither.

FRECK. Feather, pay me that other fifteen cents you owe me on that glove, 'r han' it here.

SKEET. Aw, come off, Freck. I'll pay y' nex' week. Hones' I will. I'm gonna sell my rags an' bottles nex' week.

FRECK. Pay me right now.

SKEET. I ain't got no fifteen cents. Lemme wait'll I sell my stuff.

FRECK. Gimme that mitt here, then. [Takes glove from him.]

DOOD. Looka here, fellers, this is gonna bust up our ball club worse'n dynamite. Le's all be reas'nable. Le's vote on a Captun an' Pitcher.

FRECK. Aw right, vote, then, if y' want to, but remember what I said in the first place an' be keerful who y' vote fer.

SKEET. Gimme my glove back, Freck, an' I won't vote. I'll c'nduc' th' votin' fer th' rest uv ye. [FRECK gives him the glove.]

FEATHER. I make a motion that we elect a Captun an' let him 'point all th' players to their places.

TAG [winks at FRECK]. Tha's all right.

SKEET. How will y' vote?

PUG. Seekrut ballit. That's how.

DOOD. I gotta pencil.

FEATHER. Here's some paper. [Tears off strip for each boy and retains one.]

DOOD [winks at PUG]. Mine ain't hard t' vote. [Writes, folds slip and passes pencil to PUG.]

FRECK. All I gotta say is, be keerful how y' vote now.

PUG [writing]. This is a free country, I reckin. Ever' man's gotta right t' vote accordin' t' th' dictates uv 'is own happiness. [Passes pencil to FEATHER.]

FEATHER [writes and passes pencil to TAG]. Here, Tag, an' remember th' home runs.

TAG [voting]. I ain't fergittin' nothin', I don't want to. [Passes pencil to FRECK.]

FRECK. Well, fellers, I s'pose I jest as well put one in, too. [Votes.]

[SKEET now collects the ballots with an air of great dignity.]

SKEET. Well, gen'men an' feller ball-players, it now becomes my dooty t' inform y' uv th' results uv yer ballust. [Opens ballots one by one in silence.]

DOOD. Y' mean balluts, y' simp.

PUG. Read 'em out, Moses in th' dark. What y' waitin' on?

SKEET. Well, this'n says, "Pug."

TAG. 'Twon't do 'im no good, if he did vote fer hisse'f.

SKEET. This'n says, "Feather."

PUG. You li'l runt—whyn't y' vote fer me?

SKEET. This'n says, "Pug."

DOOD [*nudges Pug*]. Told y' mine's easy voted. Guess ye'll let me be Coach, won't ye, Pug?

FRECK. Th' votes ain't all in yit.

SKEET. Both o' these here says, "Freck."

FEATHER. His'n an' Tag's.

SKEET. That makes th' vote stan' two fer Pug, two fer Freck an' one fer Feather. That's a tie between Pug an' Freck.

PUG [*menacingly*]. You vote th' tie off, Skeet.

SKEET. I'd ruther not, fellers. Honest I would.

FRECK. Now looka here, fellers, I been perlite t' y' all an' treated y' all nice 's. I knowed how 'n didn't wanna hafta go inter no grawsome details, so t' speak. But after givin' fair warnin' t' one an' all how t' vote an' still y' all went on like blin' pigs in a packin' house, so I'll hafta jes' play a lil pollyticks now. [*Pauses ominously.*] Now looka here, fellers, who owns th' most uv th' baseball outfit uv this club? [*Boys exchange glances, but avoid FRECK's eye.*]

TAG. Me'n you does, Freck. [To boys]. That's a fac', fellers, an' y' all know it, too.

FRECK. Yes, an' more'n that, who owns this vacunt lot our dimunt's on? My paw, that's who. An' who's got a uncle that's a cop on this beat an' won't bother us, no matter how many winders we break out, so long's his nephew's Captun? Me—that's who. So now here's th' proppyzishun. Y' all c'n reconsider an' vote agin'r git t' heck outa here.

DOOD. Le's vote agin, fellers.

PUG. We'll hafta vote agin. More paper, Feather.

FEATHER. Le's vote by voice.

TAG. Now yer shoutin'.

SKEET. Aw right, then, who'll y' have fer yer Captun?
Nommynashuns is in order fer a Captun uv this Base
Ball Club uv Piruts.

PUG
DOOD
FEATHER }
TAG } *I nommynate Freck!*

SKEET. Freck is nommynated. Any more nommynashuns?
[Profound silence.] Aw right, then, we'll vote. All that
wants Freck fer Captun say *I*.

PUG
DOOD
FEATHER }
TAG
FRECK } *I—I—I—I—I!*

TAG. Freck, you're Captain.

FRECK. Who said I wuzn't a pollytishun? I'm gonna run
fer Guvner some day when I git grown.

PUG, DOOD, FEATHER, TAG, SKEET. Hooray fer Freck!

[FRECK bows very low as curtain falls.]

RISTUS AND RASTUS

CHARACTERS

RISTUS, *Colored*
RASTUS, *Discolored*

RISTUS AND RASTUS [enter dancing and singing to the tune of, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," the following words].

Well, it's ha'd times in de ole home town,
Chickens am mighty po',
But mah wife's got a dandy job
An' I ain't a-gonna wuk no mo'.

Chorus

Oh, I ain't a-gonna wuk no mo', no mo'.
An' I ain't a-gonna wuk no mo'.
Fo' mah wife's got a dandy job
An' I ain't a-gonna wuk no mo'.

RISTUS. Bo', ain't I light on mah feet?

RASTUS. Yeah, yo's gwine-a fool 'roun' heah tho', an' light on yo' haid de fust thing you know.

RISTUS. Dat so? Well, ef I wuz to, I wouldn't bust no plank lak you did when you fell aginst de do' haid fust.

RASTUS. Huh, niggah, mah haid may be hahd, but I ain't nevah axed fo' no job lak what you did.

RISTUS. What kin' o' job is I axed fo'?

RASTUS. You knows.

RISTUS. Maybe I does, but which one is you talkin' 'bout?
Ise had lotsa jobs.

RASTUS. I knows dat you's had lotsa jobs, but who gib 'em to ye? De Jedge did—dat's who. He's gonna gib you anurran, too, ef you doan' let folkses chickens alone.

RISTUS. Ne'mine 'bout dem chickens. I wants to know what job is you talkin' 'bout dat I axed fo'.

RASTUS. Why, you come along one day an' wanted a job playin' de Jew's ha'p at a Deef an' Dum' School.

RISTUS. Aw—where'd you heah dat?

RASTUS. One o' dem boys dat goes t' school dere tol' me one day.

RISTUS. Tha's 'bout what I thought. Now looka heah, Rastus.

RASTUS. Yes, Ristus.

RISTUS. You knows dat you cain't un'estan' dat triggah wuk talkin' dey does wid deir fingahs. Now can you?

RASTUS. Ob co'se I cain't. But he tol' me, anyhow.

RISTUS. Well, den, how did he tol' you?

RASTUS. Why, he had a big plate o' baked sweet 'tatahs an' possum. Ain't dat enough t' tol' anybody wid?

RISTUS. Man, I reckon so. He could tol' me wid dem. But did you evah git any o' dem 'tatahs an' possum?

RASTUS. Yeah, I bought 'em.

RISTUS. Gwan, niggah, you nevah had a nickel in yo' life. How'd you buy 'em?

RASTUS. I bought 'em by weight.

RISTUS. I nevah did heahed o' buyin' possum an' 'tatahs by weight.

RASTUS. I did. I waits till he sets 'em down t' open a gate, den I bought 'em.

RISTUS. Well, you ain't sich a fool as what you looks lak.

RASTUS. No, an' you doan' look lak sich a fool as what you is, neithah.

RISTUS. Doan' worry, I gen'ly takes well among de rich fo'kses.

RASTUS. Yeah. Dat's what all ob 'em said dat I talked wid. Fact is, I tink yo' took a little too well. Dat's how come de Jedge gib yo' dat Grammah lesson.

RISTUS. He ain' nevah gib me no lesson in Grammah. What yo' talkin' 'bout, niggah?

RASTUS. Yes, he did, too. Diden' he gib yo' a sentence?

RISTUS. Well, dat am so. He also musta thought dat I didn' knows mah A B C's, 'cause he dun tole me I bettah watch mah P's and Q's.

RASTUS. Yeah, an' yo' had ter take dat sentence an' wuk it out, didn't yo'?

RISTUS. Ise s'posed to, but I nevah dun it.

RASTUS. 'Co'se you didn't. You's nevah known to wuk at nuthin' in yo' life. Dem fellahs at de jail got tiahed a-feedin' you an' seein' you weah dem rock piles out a-settin' on 'em, so dey tuhned you a-loose.

RISTUS. Looka dere, bo. Ain' dat a purty gal? She sho is some steppah, ain't she?

RASTUS. I guess she is some steppah. Huh name is Walkah an she's mah step-sistah.

RISTUS. Well, she ain't to blame 'bout huh no-count mighty nigh kin-fo'kses. I'd like to git mo' familiyah wid huh.

RASTUS. Well, all I got to say is, dat any time you gits mo' familiyah wid dat gal, you'll jes' git hung, dat's all.

RISTUS. Sholy not so bad as all dat. Who's gwine-a hang me?

RASTUS. She is, dat's who. Gib huh ha'f a chance an' she'll hang huh hooks in you so deep dat you'll be trottin' 'long in double hahness fo' de res' ob yo' natchal life, an' long as she c'd han't ye aftah you's dead. Yessah, you'd be pullin' double in no time.

RISTUS. Not dis chile. Dere's whah I'd balk.

RASTUS. An' deres whah she'd jes' up an twist yo' eahs, sah.

RISTUS. I see dat dey mus' be sumpin' de mattah wid yo' whah' wimmens is consarnéd. Bet you'd ruther miss a kiss dan to kiss a miss.

RASTUS. Wat diffunce would dey be 'tween missin' a kiss an' kissin' a miss no how?

RISTUS. Whole lots, man. Ef you miss a kiss, you must be pahted, but ef you kiss a miss you's jes' got stahted.
[Laughs gleefully.]

RASTUS. You seems to know all about it.

RISTUS. I does, I uster be a perfessor of Kissology.

RASTUS. Awri, den tell me what am de three kisses dat is mentioned in de Bible?

RISTUS. I said I wuz a Perfessah. I diden' said Preachah. I doan' knows nuthin' 'bout de Bible 'cept dat it says "Let de dade bury de dade." What am de three kisses you's talkin' 'bout?

RASTUS. Why, doan' de Bible speaks about Faith, Hope an' Charity? Co'se it do. Well, dem's de three kisses.

RISTUS. How come?

RASTUS. Well, when you kisses yo' sweetheart, dat am faith. Ef she didn' hab no faith in you, you coulden' kiss huh; an' when you kisses yo' wife, dat am hope, 'ca'se she hopes you ain't been kissin' nobody else.

RISTUS. Dat's all right; but wheah does de charity comes in?

RASTUS. Oh, dat's when you kisses a ole maid.

RISTUS. Well, ef dat's de case, deys a lot uv us sho is stingy. But speakin' ob kisses, I wants to ax you a conjunction.

RASTUS. Shoot.

RISTUS. Why am kissin' yo' guhl like fishin' pickles outuva bottle wid a hat pin?

RASTUS. Man, dey ain' no sense to dat kin' ob a conjunction.

RISTUS. 'Co'se dey's sense to it. It's 'ca'se aftah you gits de fust one, de rest am easy.

RASTUS. Yeah, bo. But gittin' de fust one am de hahdest paht. An' suh, one time I wuz goin' wid a gal an' I bet I kissed huh a million times. But I nebbah *did* git de fust one.

RISTUS. You's crazy, niggah. How could you kiss huh a millium times, if you nebbah did git de fust one?

RASTUS. Dat's easy. Dey wuz anothah coon went wid huh befo' I did.

RISTUS. I bet he kissed huh aftahwa'ds an' between times too. Dey ain' no mo' depen'ence in dese heah wimmen.

RASTUS. No, but dey's sho lotsa *in'epon'ence* in 'em, though. Take my wife—

RISTUS [*interrupting*], I doan' wants huh.

RASTUS. I means take huh fo' a zample. She am gittin' so in'epen'ent dat she sez Foth ob July am huh birfday.

RISTUS. Yeah, but she doan' waits till den ter cellybrate.

RASTUS. I say she don't.

RISTUS. Did you know dat I cellybrated mah wooden weddin' de oder day?

RASTUS. Naw, gwan, niggah. Dat's five yeahs an' you ain't been married but two.

RISTUS. I knows it, but five yeahs ago I asked a gal would she marry me an' she says she woulден'.

RASTUS. She wuzn't no fool at dat.

RISTUS. No, but I wuz.

RASTUS. What makes you say dat?

RISTUS. I wuz a fool fo' askin' huh. But it's all off now.

RASTUS. You gittin' mo' wuss evah day ob yo' life.
What's all off?

RISTUS [*points to bald-headed man in audience*]. The haih frum dat man's haid.

RASTUS [*pushing RISTUS*]. Git off-a heah befo' you gits all de fuzz jerked off-a yo' coco'nut.

CURTAIN

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

CHARACTERS

MA, *When she knows anything she knows it well*
PA, *Who likes his fun if it goes off right*
JAKE
JOHN { *Right in with Pa*
MARY
KATE { *Right in with Ma*

Discovered: MA, PA, JAKE, JOHN, MARY, and KATE seated; but as soon as curtain is well up, MA and the girls become much excited as if something had run across the floor. GIRLS scream and climb into their chairs, holding their dresses close about their knees. PA and the boys remain calmly seated as if doubting that anything had happened.

MA. Mercy sakes! What was that? [Jumps up and grabs broom.] Was that a rat?

PA. Just a mouse, I guess.

MARY. Looked like a kangaroo to me.

KATE. Where did it go? Why didn't you boys try to kill it?

JOHN. Why didn't you kill it? I never seen nobody holdin' you an' you wuzn't tied, I reckon.

JAKE. Fiddlesticks, who'd want to kill a li'l' ole he'pless mouse?

PA [laughs]. Jump down, girls. Set down, Ma. I'll have the boys take immediate measures for your protection.

[GIRLS get out of chairs but remain standing and cast furtive glances about the room as if still afraid. MA sits but still holds the broom.]

MA. Now act the fool, Pa. I wanted to kill that rat.

JAKE. Kill's foot, Ma. You couldn't hit the side of a barn with a bass fiddle.

JOHN. That wuz jest a mouse, anyhow, Ma. [Turns to GIRLS.] What you all shakin' so fer? 'Fraid you'll git devoured?

PA [mock seriousness]. No, no, boys. Say not so, in tones so reckless. The peace and dignity of this family have been outrageously and unbecomingly disturbed and interrupted in a manner both dangerous and alarming, and it is with apprehension mingled with fear, tugging at my palpitating heart, that I beseech you, boys, nay, even implore you, to make defensive preparations for the protection of our fireside and threshold ere the invader shall come again. So hear me, then, oh, my sons. Make ready your weapons of warfare. [All of the preceding should be spoken in a grandiloquent voice; then at the last end in mock tragedy.] Git yer bean flips and kill that mouse!

MA. You're a born fool, Pa. That was no mouse, anyway.

PA. No, of course not. It was a lion.

MARY. Well, whatever it was, I didn't want the thing to climb me.

KATE. Nor me, either. It makes my flesh creep to think about it. [Shudders.]

JOHN. Didn't look to me like your flesh wuz creepin', Sis. Seemed more like you had St. Vitus' dance, t' me.

MA. Don't try to be so funny, John. Why didn't you kill that rat?

JOHN. Didn't see none, Ma.

KATE. Didn't see it? Don't see how you could keep from seeing it. Why, the thing was as big as a cow.

JAKE. Yeah, it shore wuz. 'Bout th' size o' one o' them cows on a milk can.

MARY. Oh, you boys make me tired, trying to be so cool about everything. I really don't believe you'd care one bit to eat worms.

MA. Mary, do hush.

JOHN. 'Course we wouldn't, Sis. You see, we've done got used to eatin' your cookin'.

PA. An' Ma's an' Kate's. Purty good, John, purty good.

KATE. We don't cook worms.

JAKE. No, but you cook that Dago stuff you call Spy of Gettysburg an' I'd jest as soon eat worms.

MA. Spaghetti is a very choice dish with some of our leading families.

PA. An' with some of our misleading ones, too, I guess, but I'd rather make my own choice. Every man's taste is in his own tongue and if a feller don't like anything, he just don't like it, that's all.

MA. Folks that ain't too stubborn an' contrary can learn to like a great many things, if they try. It is said that Mrs. Hortonspiker, according to her own confession, simply made herself like ripe olives.

JOHN. I bet she don't like 'em yit.

[GIRLS jump up into chair again.]

MARY. Oh, there it is again!

KATE. Kill it, boys!

MA. Where? Where? [Flourishing broom.]

JAKE. There he goes! [Pretends to chase a mouse on hands and knees.]

JOHN [follows suit]. Soak 'im, Jake.

MA. Let me hit it with the broom, boys. [Strikes wildly.]

KATE. O-o-o-e-e! He's comin' this way. [MA and Boys rush toward GIRLS.]

MARY. The dreadful thing!

JOHN. Stamp 'im.

JAKE. Smash 'im.

MA. Uh-h-h. [She swings broom and hits JOHN, bowling him over.] I nearly got him that time.

JAKE. Looks like you got 'im—John, though.

JOHN [getting up]. Hey, lookout, Ma. Watch whatcha doin'.

PA [has been standing, calmly watching the excited actions of others]. Forward, soldiers! On after the foe! Here he comes. [Lifts foot and stands as if waiting for a moment, then brings foot down with a slam beside a "planted" mouse.] Ah! Fierce beast, I have slain you. [Stops and picks up mouse by tail.] Soldiers, you fought

valiantly and well. Mary and Kate [*faces GIRLS*] from your observation posts high above the battlefield, you kept close watch upon the fray. And I must say reported quite often enough. Privates John and Jake [*turns to Boys*] your courage was magnificent—but your feet were too big and clumsy. Colonel Ma [*bowing to MA*] you displayed a wonderful accuracy with your ah-er-weapon. If the boys had kept out of your way, I think you'd have made a killing early in the fight. Came near doing so as it was. So now, in view of your devotion to duty and in slight recognition of your splendid example of leadership, I am going to raise you to rank of Jigadier Brindle and present to you all the spoils of battle—this great big, fierce, and erstwhile untamed mouse. [*Holds mouse out to MA.*]

MA. Don't you put that rat on me, Pa.

JAKE. Rat?

MA. I really believe that Pa has lost his mind to carry on so over a rat.

MARY [*gets down*]. Is it really a rat? I thought maybe it was a giraffe. Its tail is mighty long.

KATE. Giraffes have long necks, Mary.

MARY. Oh, well, I knew there was something long about them. Then this is really a rat!

JOHN. That's a mouse.

PA. 'Course it is.

MA. It's no such thing. It's way yonder too large for a mouse. I guess I know a rat when I see one.

JAKE. Aw, come off, Ma. You're seein' two or three sizes too big.

KATE [*gets down*]. I believe it is a rat.

PA. Of course, you do. If Ma said it was a hippopotamus you'd say so too.

MARY. I wouldn't. But that is a rat.

JOHN. Hear that. If Ma's t' get pepper up her nose, Mary an' Kate'd both sneeze fer a week.

MA. You boys think it's smart to stand in with your Pa, don't you?

JAKE. No, ma'am, just sensible, that's all.

MA. Don't pay any more attention to what they say, girls. All three of them just want to tease us. They know that it is a rat.

PA. Not in the least. I'm serious as a judge right now.

MA. All right, then, if you are going to be serious, there is no use to continue such a foolish argument. Let's let the subject drop. [Sits.]

MARY. Sure, drop it, Pa, drop it out of the window. [Sits.]

JOHN. Yeah, drop it, Pa. Th' thing might come alive again an' clim' th' girls.

[PA throws mouse out.]

KATE. Say, what you like. I am glad the thing is dead for keeps.

JAKE. What thing?

KATE. Why, the rat, of course.

MA. Don't get the argument started again, Kate. You know that if Pa and the boys get started again, they'll hold out till Doom's Day that it was a mouse.

PA. It was a mouse; but I don't care what you say. You can call it an elephant if you want to, so far as I am concerned. Don't contradict, boys, if you hear the poor little mouse called anything else but it's right name.

MA. What did I tell you? There he is, off again.

PA. Off again? Yes, I reckon. I let you have it, once *your way*. Gave over to you and hushed.

MA. Yes, you did. You got ashamed of your foolishness, I suppose, and *hushed*. Of course you wouldn't have the nerve to keep on calling a rat a mouse always. Still, I didn't get mad.

JOHN. Why, Ma, you look as mad as a wet hen right now over that little ole mouse.

MARY. Oh, smarty, that was a rat.

KATE. Of course, it was.

PA. Why, of course, girls, to be sure, Ma, it was a rat. No question about that any longer.

MA. Well, there is not, nor has there ever been any ques-

tion in my mind about it, Pa. So I don't see any need for you to get sarcastic, nor for the boys to act so cute, either.

JOHN. Le's go play shinny, Jake, and call it golf.

JAKE. 'Bout as well, I guess.

PA. I'll go with you, boys. We can call it polo, if we want to.

[*Exeunt all three.*]

MARY. Don't they think they're smart, though?

KATE. I should say so. If Pa says frog, they are ready to jump in the river.

MA. Yes, yes. But I'm beginning to think now that they really believed it *was* a mouse. Of course, they can't help it if they don't actually know the difference. Now when *I* know anything, *I know it*. That was a *RAT*.

CURTAIN

CHEATERS

CHARACTERS

MR. JENKINS, TOM, JACK

Discovered: MR. JENKINS reading, TOM and JACK seated on floor playing mumble-the-peg

TOM. That don't count, Jack. That don't count. You caught it to keep it from fallin' over.

JACK. Aw, I never either.

TOM. You did too! I saw you. Gimme th' knife.

JACK. Give y' nuthin. I made seventy-five that time an' it's gonna count, too.

TOM. You never done it. You're tryin' t' cheat me. It's my time now. Gimme th' knife I tell y'. [Puts out hand for it.]

JACK. I'll give it to you [*savagely*] if y' don't git yer han' outa th' way. [Motions as if to pitch knife.]

TOM. Pa, make Jack gimme th' knife. [MR. JENKINS reads on.]

JACK. Aw, shut up, tattle-tale. I'll give it to you, if yer gonna be sich a baby. Here take it. [TOM extends hand and JACK pretends to be giving him the knife, but instead slaps him.]

TOM. Oh, you ole cheater. [Strikes JACK.]

JACK. Look out there. [Strikes back. Blows are returned on both sides, they clinch and roll about the floor grunting, etc.]

TOM. No fair pinchin'.

JACK. Well, quit yer pullin' hair.

TOM. Oh-h-h-h.

JACK. O-w-w-w.

MR. JENKINS. Boys, boys! What on earth is the matter with you?

[Boys roll apart and try to assume innocent air.]

MR. JENKINS. Speak up, now. What's the trouble?

[JACK looks at TOM, TOM looks at JACK, neither replies.]

MR. JENKINS [rising]. Out with it, now, before I tan both of you. [Boys crawl over together and, putting arms around each other's shoulders, draw as close together as possible.]

MR. JENKINS. What's the cause of this small war you young barbarians just staged? I never heard such a disturbance. Couldn't hear myself think, much less read. [Gets razor strop.] Now, Jack, you are the older, come clean and tell your trouble.

JACK. Tom pulled my hair.

TOM. He pinched me.

MR. JENKINS. Why did you pinch him?

JACK. He hit me.

TOM. He hit me first an' I wuzn't doin' nuthin'.

MR. JENKINS. Well, but what was the cause of all this fracas to begin with?

TOM. Jack cheated.

JACK. I never. He's a cry baby, 's all's a matter with 'im. Just 'cause I c'n play better'n him, he gits mad an hollers 'is head off 'bout me cheatin', when I never dun it.

TOM. He did cheat. He throwed a seventy-five, but it wuzn't gonna stan' up, so he caught it an' wanted t' count it.

JACK. 'Course I caught it. You gotta pick it up some time; if y' don't, how y' gonna play any more?

MR. JENKINS. Ah, yes—mumble-peg, eh? How many times have I told you boys not to play mumble-peg on the floor?

TOM. I guess 'bout forty times, sir.

MR. JENKINS. Had my knife, too, I guess. Where is it?

[JACK produces it from pocket.] Give it here. [Takes knife.] Now, you boys sit down here back to back and love each other a while. Be sure you keep real quiet, too.

[Places Boys flat on floor, backs together and returns to

chair, where he takes up paper and begins reading. BOYS start hunching shoulders as soon as MR. JENKINS is settled. JACK draws forward for a vicious lunge at TOM, who turns in time to see him do so and dodges. JACK lunges backward, missing TOM, of course, and sprawls over as CURTAIN is drawn.]

THE CRIPPLES

CHARACTERS

FATHER, MOTHER, NED, TED, FRED

Discovered: FATHER reading, NED, TED and FRED looking at funny paper on floor.

Enter MOTHER

MOTHER. Boys, I need a bucket of water at once to wash dishes. Go get it right quick now, one of you.

NED. My han's sore, Ma. I cain't pump no ole water.

MOTHER. Your hand is sore?

NED. Yes, it is. I told you that I blistered it yestiddy pumpin' water.

FATHER [*looks up from paper*]. Well, well, Ned, you are probably ruined for life. Ted, go get the water for your mother.

TED. Aw, I cain't neither.

FATHER. You can't? What's wrong with you?

TED. Well, I guess I gotta stone bruise on my heel that hurts so bad I cain't hardly put my foot to the groun'.

MOTHER. My sakes alive! What's to become of this place? Fred, I guess it falls on you to go, then.

FRED [*smiling sickly*]. I gotta sprained ankle, Ma. I cain't go either.

FATHER. Well, I guess we'll just have to turn this place into a hospital.

NED. Guess you don't know how a blister hurts, do you, after it's busted, a-specially.

FATHER. I know how to make one before it hurts, though, and I also know how to bust one after it's made. And sometimes bruises get on boys in other places than their heels.

TED. But I've got an awful bad stone bruise. Worst I ever saw. It jest aches an' th'obs all th' time.

FRED. Yes'n my ankle's swelled in a strut, too.

MOTHER. Poor little boys, just suffer all the time in brave silence, never telling mother a word about their afflictions. Why didn't you let me know, so that I could do something for you?

FATHER. They'll let you do something for them now, Mother. They'll be perfectly willing for you to bring in the water for them.

FRED. If my ankle wuzn't so bad, I'd be glad t' git it in a jiffy. [*Puts foot down on floor, groans and makes a face.*]

NED. I just cain't hardly use my han' a-tall, 'r I'd git it. [*Feels right hand gingerly with left.*]

TED. I wish my heel wuz well. I wouldn't wait a minute. [*Puts foot down in imitation of FRED.*]

FATHER. Yes, yes, we know it, boys. Do sit back down now and try to find some comfortable position for your injured parts. I'll get the water. [*Exit left.*]

MOTHER. I'll bring some liniment for your ankle, Fred; some salve for your hand, Ned; and Ted, I'll make a poultice to go on your heel. [*Exit right.*]

NED. That wuz purty slick, wuzn't it, boys?

FRED. I'll say it wuz.

TED. They both fell for it right along. Pa shore fell hard.

FRED. If he ketches on, though, he'll make us feel hard about it.

Reënter FATHER from left with pail of water

FATHER. Skinny Weeks and Chub Peters went by as I was getting the water, boys.

[*Boys all jump up hastily.*]

NED. They did?

TED. Which way'd they go?

FRED. Did they have their baseball outfit?

FATHER. Yes, they had some gloves and a bat and ball. They went on down toward the diamond.

TED [*frisking about room*]. Wonder where my glove is now.

FRED [*ditto*]. Bet I cain't fin' my bat.

NED. Here's my ole pud. [Socks his right hand into palm of glove.]

FATHER. But Ted—your heel.

TED. It's a lot better now, Pa.

FATHER. Careful there, with that ankle, Fred; and Ned, you'll ruin your sore hand like that.

NED. Th' glove pertects my han', Pa.

FRED. I cain't hardly feel no pain in my ankle a-tall now —th' swellin's plum gone, too. I b'lieve a bit o' exercise'd be good fer it.

FATHER. But I'm afraid for you boys to go out and play ball today. It might make cripples of you for the rest of your lives. Better stay in, I guess, till tomorrow, anyhow, boys.

BOYS. Aw, heck.

Reënter MOTHER with bottle, salve box and bowl in hands; slung across her shoulder are several bandages.

FATHER. Sit down, boys, sit down. Careful now, don't injure yourselves. [As MOTHER approaches.] Mother, what have you here?

MOTHER. This is healing oil for Fred's ankle [indicates bottle]. This is salve for Ned's hand [indicates box] and here I have a milk poultice to go on Ted's heel.

[Boys exchange uneasy glances.]

FATHER. Good, Mother. That's simply fine. We'll have the boys well in no time, now. But Mother, put your things down here on the table. I'll set my water down, too. Now bring some red pepper to put in that salve and poultice. Pepper is awful healing. And bring that bottle of mange cure to mix with the healing oil. It's recommended mighty highly as an antiseptic.

[Exit MOTHER. Boys exchange glances again. FATHER begins to sharpen his knife on his shoe.]

FRED. Whatcha doin', Pa?

FATHER. Oh, I'm just getting my knife ready to split that

blister and the stone bruise. Need to be opened good and deep, so the medicine will take effect.

TED [*aside*]. Red pepper in a split heel. Gosh. [*Shudders*.]

NED. What about my han'?

FRED. Say, we'd better call a halt here. He shore means bizness.

NED. Tell 'im, Fred. [*FRED shakes his head*.]

TED. I will. Say-a-oh-aw-Pa, we ain't crippled. We all played off.

FATHER [*affecting surprise*]. Wha-at?

NED. We did, Pa.

FRED. But we won't no more.

TED. We'll git th' nex' water 'thout a bit uv waitin'.

Reenter MOTHER, with pepper and mange cure in her hands.

FATHER. Mighty glad to hear it, boys. Mother, by a little magic of mine, I have completely cured the boys, so we won't need all these remedies. Got anything you want them to do?

MOTHER. No, not just now.

FATHER. Thought maybe you had. Boys need exercise.

NED. Baseball's good exercise, ain't it, Pa?

FATHER. Finest in the world.

[Boys *brighten up*.]

FRED. C'n we go play with Skinny 'n Chub 'n their gang?

FATHER. Well, you could, only that was a little bit of magic, too, about Skinny and Chub. I haven't seen them today. [*Reflects*.] But you boys do need exercise. Could you maybe exercise without the others?

TED. You bet we could.

FATHER. All right then. [*Pauses, Boys rush to door with baseball outfit in hands*.] Just a minute, though. Leave your baseball goods here and go exercise on the woodpile.

THE NEW BOY

CHARACTERS

HARRY }
JOHN }
TOM } *Birds of a feather*

HELEN, *Likes fun if not too rough*

AGNES, *Gentle as a lamb*

THE NEW BOY

Discovered: JOHN, HARRY, TOM, HELEN and AGNES seated in schoolroom.

HARRY. Say, kids, what're we gonna do fer th' new boy that's comin' t'day?

AGNES. Do for him? Why, I didn't know that we were supposed to do anything for him.

HELEN. Oh, simple, he means some kind of trick to play on him, like the boys always do with a new pupil.

TOM. Yeah, that's it "perzactly." We must git up a good 'n fer this feller, 'cause we ain't give nobody the third degree in a long time now.

AGNES. Why do you boys always want to do something mean or annoying to every new pupil who comes to our school? You ought to be as agreeable as possible to a stranger.

JOHN. Aw, can that goody-goody stuff, Aggie. If you want to be a "mishunary," y' ort t' go to Africa an' work among th' heathens that don't wear no clo'es.

AGNES. I wouldn't need to go to Africa to find heathen. I can find plenty of them right here. Only difference is that they wear a few more clothes and are not quite so black. But if you boys had your way, you'd soon be as black as the negroes, and I guess about as scarce of clothes.

JOHN. Aw, come off, now, Aggie. You're really too young and sweet to act so old and sour.

HELEN. That's what I say. Don't try to put on like you're so good. We all know that you've already seen that new boy and got stuck on him, or you wouldn't care if the boys broke his neck. I like to see a little fun myself, so long as no one really gets hurt.

HARRY. Now there's th' girl fer me.

JOHN. Maybe you'd better ask her pa first, though, Harry.

HARRY. Aw, I mean she's th' kind of girl I like. One that's not so squeamy that she don't believe in nobody havin' a good time.

TOM. Me, too. Them's my "sentymints perzactly."

HELEN. What's this boy's name, Agnes?

AGNES. None o' your business.

TOM. That's a funny name, ain't it, boys?

HARRY. Shore is. Nunyer Bizness. That is funny. I knowed a feller once named Nunley, but I never heared of Nunyer before.

JOHN. Maybe that's a nickname.

AGNES. No, it's not.

JOHN. Say it is? Well, I wouldn't a-thought you'd keer fer a feller with a name like that.

AGNES. Like what?

TOM. What you said.

AGNES. Why, silly, I didn't tell his name, did I?

HARRY. Shore you did. I said maybe it wuz Nunyer an' you said, "No, it's Snot."

AGNES. O-h-h! I never either-r.

HELEN. Well, what is his name, then?

AGNES. If you just have to know, it's Algernon Percival Pendleton-Harris.

HARRY. W'at a name!

JOHN. Worse'n ever.

HELEN. I should smile and say so.

TOM. Aggie's li'l' Percy, on him we'll have mercy. Nix.

HELEN. Bet he carries a vanity and a nail file.

AGNES. Wait and see.

HARRY. Got purty long curls, ain't he?

JOHN. Oh, me, oh, my, won't we make a killin'?

AGNES. Yonder he comes now. See if you do.

JOHN. Give 'im th' Ole Reliable, boys. You know.

TOM. Sure, Mike, we do.

HARRY. Leave it to us, John.

HELEN. Don't hurt him very much, boys.

[Enter NEW Boy, book satchel slung across his shoulder; he wears white collar and cuffs, which may be made of paper, a Buster Brown tie, and in his hands he carries a lunch basket, drinking cup and a bottle of milk. Walks timidly toward others.]

AGNES. Oh, good morning, Percy.

NEW Boy [nervously watching boys]. Why, a-good morn-ing, Agnes.

HELEN [advancing with mischievous smile and offering hand]. How do you do, Percy? My name is Helen.

NEW Boy [gingerly takes her hand]. Howdy do, Helen. Helen what, though?

TOM. Her last name is Blazes.

NEW Boy Blazes? Helen— Oh, surely not.

JOHN [goes to NEW Boy and slaps him vigorously on the back.] Surest thing you know, ole top. [Motions Tom to get behind NEW Boy.] Have off yer hat, ole man, an' put yer things down—make yourself comfortable while you can. [NEW Boy puts things down.]

HARRY. We're awful glad you come, Pussy, o-a-er I mean Percy.

JOHN. Tickled to death.

[By this time Tom has worked around behind the NEW Boy, where he crouches. JOHN makes ready to shove the new pupil over. Without seeming to look behind, the NEW Boy kicks TOM over, then pitches forward in such a way that he butts JOHN in the stomach and at the same time swings out one hand to box HARRY's jaw.]

NEW Boy. Oh, excuse me, boys, I must have lost my balance.

AGNES. Goody, goody, goody!

HELEN. Did you ever see the like?

JOHN [*caressing his stomach*]. You got an awful hard head, fer sich a name.

HARRY. Say, feller—be keerful 'bout accidents like that.

TOM. I wuz stoopin' over t' tie up my shoe when you pitched into me an' nearly busted a rib loose. How come, anyhow?

NEW Boy [*tearing off collar, tie and cuffs*]. Yeah, [*in changed tones*] how come, anyhow? I would say it. *Say, fellers, yerse'f.* Why'n't y' spring sumpin' new? That Ole Reliable wuz wore out 'fore George Washington chopped down his pa's favorite cherry sprout.

AGNES [*horrified*]. Such lang-usage. Why, Percy!

NEW Boy. Don't Percy me. Can that ole stuff right now.

HELEN. But that's your name, isn't it?

NEW Boy. Not much, it ain't.

HARRY. The joke's on us, Percival. Guess we'll have to call you by your full name for the way you got back at us.

TOM. Say Percival Algernon, then.

JOHN. And Pendleton-Harris, too.

HELEN. He deceives his name.

NEW Boy. But *that* ain't my name.

AGNES. Why, you told me that was your name.

NEW Boy. Yeah, but I'se jest a-kiddin' you. Lissen, fellers, my name is Bill Stubbs, better known as Grubworm Stubbs.

AGNES. How shocking!

HELEN. That's fine.

NEW Boy. An' where I come from wuz so tough that th' canary birds all sung bass. Now you fellers go git sand-paper collars an' rough up yer necks a bit an' I'll let you see if you c'n clean up on me.

CURTAIN

THE POETS CORNERED

CHARACTERS

SUE, PEARL, HELEN and CLEMENTINE

Enter SUE, holding manuscript in her hand

SUE.

Now, dear friends, whom here I see,
I have some words to say to thee.
We've studied poetry in our school
Until I think our teacher's a—[clears throat] rule
Is very good for old and young.
So here tonight, our "pomes" we've brung.

[*Goes to door.*]

Come right in, girls. [*Girls enter.*] Let's each one bow
To show the crowd we all know how.

[*All make elaborate bows to audience, then sit in semicircle*]

Of which is best or which is worst
You now may judge. Pearl, read first. [*Sits.*]

PEARL [*rises*].

My name is Pearl, I am a gem.
[No, not the kind that means a *him*.]
The kind of gem I spoke about
Is smooth and round as a piggy's snout.

[That don't sound good, but it made the rhyme—
That's what we must watch all the time.]

Capital P-e-a-r-l,
If you'll remember, my name will spell.
Without the P, my name is Earl—
A tomboy right—

OTHERS. Hush, Pearl. [PEARL *sits.*]

SUE [*rises.*].

We're really gifted—there is no doubt—
Which all of you will soon find out.
And now we hope you'll lend your ears
And get some buckets to catch your tears,
For now our Helen will relate
A poetic tale of her sad fate. [*Sits.*]

HELEN [*rises.*].

My dearest friends, when I was small,
I chanced one day to catch a fall.
[Or so it's said by one and all,
Though it seems *I* was *caught* and not the fall.]

Well, the hard old floor just sprained my leg,
And raised a bump like a big goose egg
Right 'tween my eyes, so I couldn't see,
And my neck got twisted as crooked as could be.

As I got older, my neck alone
Seemed dead bent to get full grown.
It got so big it spread my fame
And caused me to get a queer nickname.

[*Pause.*]

Until a surgeon reduced the wreck
I was called.....“The Neck.” [*Sits.*]

OTHERS. *Hel-en!*

SUE [*rising.*].

Now wipe your eyes, don't look so blue.
Maybe your nose needs a small wipe, too.
But we've another bright star to shine——
I'll introduce our Clementine.

CLEMENTINE [*should be the fleshiest girl in school*].

I may be last, though far from least.

My slogan is, "Eat Baker's yeast."

It helps the body; it helps the brain.

Just try it yourself—new power you'll gain.

If in this life wealth, fame, you seek,
Oh, hear me as I truly speak.

[*Pauses, then goes on solemnly and slowly.*]

If you would be healthy, wealthy and wise,
Eat Baker's yeast—you're bound to rise.

SUE [*in stage whisper, pulling Clementine's dress*].

Oh, Clementine, now heed my pull.

CLEMENTINE [*turning*].

Let me go. Of my subject I'm full.

[*Back to audience.*]

But if yeast gets jarred, it's no good at all,
And she's jarred me, thus causing my fall. [Sits.]

SUE [*rising*].

Of spontaneous combustion you've no doubt heard.
[No, composition's the word]

Spontaneous composition we often have tried.

We thus have made poems till all of us cried.

So now for a close—a *gran' day fine awl*,
Spontaneously we'll give, "The Story of Poll."

GIRLS [*all rise*].

Pearl's our starter. Now start at the start
And render the Prelude to each waiting heart.

PEARL [*majestically*].

Have you heard our story? Nay? I thought so.
Well, all of this happened many long years ago,
When the world was new and coffee and pie
Both sold for a nickel anywhere you'd buy.

It's a gripping story of love and romance
In the days when men wore close-fitting pants.
So list to our story so sad, yet so true.
I've given the prelude and now *I'm* through.

HELEN [*tragically*].

'Twas a cold, bitter night and the wind howled on
When to see his fair Poll brave Charley had gone.
Poll was a pet name used only by Charles
For her temper was *pol-ished*—she hid all her snarls.

It chanced that as Poll went to dress, it was cold,
So she used a long bodkin, her shawl to hold.

[HELEN closes, all look to CLEMENTINE, who has seated herself again.]

SUE [*after a short pause*].

You should rise, Clementine, to say the least.

CLEMENTINE.

Wait just a moment, till I eat my yeast.

[Puts a piece of candy in her mouth and swallows it.]

[Rises].

As Charley was hastening his dear love to meet,
He thought of the manner in which he would greet.

At last he was there. . . . To his breast see her dart.

[Makes gesture of embracing some one, then steps back,
arms hanging listlessly at side, head drooping.]

But that fearful sharp bodkin has gone through his heart.

She groaned then to see his blood slowly gush—

[CLEMENTINE looks pleadingly to HELEN, HELEN to PEARL and PEARL to SUE, who assumes attitude of deep study.]

ALL [after slight pause].

We've run out of rhymes— We'll now have to hush.

CURTAIN

BERTHA BRINGS HOME THE BACON

CHARACTERS

MR. HOOD, *Embarrassed financially*

VI, MRS. HOOD, *Embarrassed by poor relations*

JENKINS, *The Hood's butler*

BERTHA SNODGRASS, *Hood's relative*

MR. MCGEE, *Banker*

MRS. MCGEE, *Aristocratic wife*

Discovered: HOOD seated, head hidden by paper. MRS. HOOD, or "VI," stands near window toying with some flowers or ferns.

HOOD [*lowering paper*]. Look here, Vi, it says here that a prominent society woman, a regular—— How do you pronounce that word?

VI [*annoyed*]. What word?

HOOD. This one here in front of dame.

VI [*snappishly*]. How can I tell?

HOOD. Why, at the top of your voice if you keep climbing the scale with it. I suppose, though, that your voice is imitating your attempts to mount the social ladder and hobnob with the high flyers.

VI. Be more refined, Hood. The servants might hear you.

HOOD [*mockingly*]. Be more refined, Vi, the firemen might hear you.

VI [*indignantly*]. *The firemen?* Haven't I told you to forget the firemen? Find yourself some new friends— those fire department boys are so common.

HOOD. There's where you are wrong, Vi. Those fellows have all long ago gained *ontree*, as you'd call it, to the best homes in town.

VI [*sarcastically*]. You really don't say so. When, pray tell me, were they admitted?

HOOD. When the best homes got on fire.

VI [*exasperated*]. You are hopeless, Henry Hood, from your name to your taste for coarse jokes.

HOOD. Why, of course, my dear.

VI. Refinement you do not possess.

HOOD. No? But I got a mighty nice little old refinery, ain't I, Vi?

VI. Oh, yes, yes, yes. But I'm tired of hearing so much about that refinery. It's enough for you to come home from it and into the presence of my friends and me, looking like a garage man. And, pray, will you please refrain from describing to my callers again, how you make gasoline on a Para rubber baste?

HOOD. Pair o' what?

VI [somewhat proudly]. Oh, I have absorbed some of your technical terms and expressions. And it is some consolation to know that you use only the best and most well known raw materials.

HOOD. Yes, but what raw materials are you talking about, anyway?

VI [coyly]. Oh, I know a lot more about your work than you think.

HOOD. Yes, I'm sure that you do. But what was that you were talking about a bit ago? Pair o' what?

VI [proudly]. I said, Para rubber baste. Didn't think that I knew, did you?

HOOD. Um—er—a—oh, yes, to be sure.

VI [sitting on his chair arm]. Now you see, I am interested in your business, even if I do despise the horrid old grease and oil. I've told several of my friends who have influence, that everything about your establishment was most exclusive.

HOOD [indulgently]. What did you tell them about its exclusiveness?

VI. Oh, I made quite an impression on Mrs. McGee, the banker's wife. I explained to her that you used *nothing* but the purest and most expensive Para rubber to baste the edges of your tanks.

HOOD. Indeed.

VI. Yes. Every one was interested, and Mrs. McGee said that she had heard her husband speak of elastic cur-

rency, but she did not dream that gasoline had been improved to that extent.

HOOD. Oh, she did?

VI [*pleased*]. Yes, she did. Then I told her that you had to work on the idea for a long time before you finally perfected it. I invented a little bit there, to impress her more, you see.

HOOD. I should say so.

VI. But I certainly impressed her, though. I made her believe that your product was rapidly taking the day, so that you would be known soon as a captain of industry in your line.

HOOD. Fine, fine. We'll have to start you out on the road for our gas and oils yet. But did you think to tell all of them to call for my gas by its trade name of "Hood's Hot Shot?"

VI. Oh, no, Henry, I couldn't think of mentioning such a commonplace title, so I gave your gas a new name.

HOOD [*displeased*]. You did?

VI. Yes, and such an appropriate one, too. You see, I told them all a great lot about the Para rubber baste—

HOOD [*interrupting irritatedly*]. Parrafins ba—, but that's all right. Go ahead. What else did you tell 'em?

VI. Oh, I used a lot of terms I didn't quite understand myself, like Pacific gravel tea and destination tests, but they failed to understand them at all, so I am sure that I helped you a lot.

HOOD. Why, of course, I am sure of it, too. But how could you tell when they were favorably impressed?

VI. Oh, they asked so many questions and when I explained in all the big words I could think of, they pretended to understand perfectly.

HOOD. Probably they did.

VI. Mrs. McGee was so delighted to learn that steel tanks could be basted with Para rubber.

HOOD. I should think so.

VI. She means to ask her husband to baste his bank vault in the same manner.

HOOD. I'm sure he will. Then the doors of the vault will be yawning all of the time.

VI. Mrs. Bruntleigh, though, was more embarrassing. She asked me in what way our Elastic Gas was superior to other kinds.

HOOD. Of course you told her.

VI. No. I wasn't sure that I knew that myself. But she didn't find out that I didn't know, for I told her you might not want me to reveal one of your trade secrets.

HOOD. That was a pretty good dodge.

VI. Yes, I wound her up by saying that you had not yet patented your process of manufacturing gasoline on a Para rubber baste.

HOOD. There's no patent on using a parrafin ba— Oh—ah—go ahead.

VI. Well, that's all of that part; but what can I tell people is the advantage of Elastic Gas?

HOOD. Oh—a—tell 'em it'll stretch out for more miles.

VI. Why didn't I think of that?

HOOD. Oh, you didn't have the "pull," I guess. You were mighty clever to think of all that other stuff, though.

VI. Oh, Henry, do you think so?

HOOD. Sure I think so. No one else in the whole world would ever have thought of what you have told your friends.

VI. Oh, Henry! Did you say a bit ago that you wanted me to tell you a word?

HOOD. Why, yes, I believe I did. I had almost forgotten it. [Turns paper.] Here it is. Some kind of dame, I reckon, but I don't get any sense out of it.

VI [looks at word indicated]. What? That? Why, that is "mesdames." [Pronounces it "may-dams."]

HOOD. Say that some more now.

VI. May-dams, may-dams.

HOOD. What's that?

VI. Why, that is French.

HOOD. Maybe so, but part of it sounds like United States.

VI. Oh, no, dear, it's all French.

HOOD. Not mine.

Enter JENKINS from right

JENKINS [*bowing*]. A person to see you, ma'am.

VI. Where's her card?

JENKINS. Well, ma'am, judgin' from her looks, I'd say that she prob'ly got one in the Post Office.

HOOD. What's the idea, Jenkins? What has the Post Office to do with the caller?

JENKINS. Oh, I had an idea that she might have a card from Greenburg, or Middleville, or some such place. She's prob'ly been away from there long enough.

VI. What does she want?

JENKINS. Askin' your pardon, ma'am, but you'd really better ask 'er that yourself, ma'am; she wouldn't tell me.

HOOD. Sure, go bring her in, Jenkins. She may be an old friend.

JENKINS [*bows*]. Yes, sir. I'll do my best, but she don't seem like she's used to much handlin'.

[JENKINS turns away and opens door to go out. As door opens, enter BERTHA. She wears ridiculous, "up-country" clothes and carries a bandbox, old-fashioned valise and a large parasol.]

BERTHA. What kind o' place do you call this, anyhow, where a body has got to wait in a little, dark pigeon-hole of a place an' cool their heels, while the family indulges in a debate on the value of pork and beans as a disinfectant?

JENKINS [*deprecatingly*]. I told you so, sir an' ma'am.

BERTHA [*turning upon JENKINS with parasol*]. An' I told you, too, Feather-legs. You look just like one o' them old, big, feather-legged roosters a-struttin' aroun'. What made you slam that door so hard on my foot? Don't you know a lady when you see one?

JENKINS [*head high, but averted*]. Yes, when I see one.

VI [*frigidly*]. Will you please tell me what your business is?

BERTHA [*aghast*]. Business? I'll give you to know I'm a

perfect lady myself. I am not in business. Pa makes a decent livin' without us gals a-workin'. Pa, he's in the hide an' taller business, though, if that'll do you any good.

HOOD [*soothingly*]. Of course, young lady, but what is the meaning of your intrusion here? [*Looks at her shoes.*]

BERTHA [*glancing down*]. I ain't got no intrusion. Are you s'posed to wear one?

VI. What do you mean by coming here? Are you insane?

BERTHA. That's a fine question to ask a body. No! I'm not insane, but I must be in the worst bug house in the country. You all act plumb crazy. Why, I never wuz treated so in my life, an' I never treated a dog like you've treated me, me bein' comp'ny, too.

HOOD. Company? I told you, Vi, that it might be some of our relations.

VI. You may go, Jenkins. [*Waits till JENKINS goes out.*] Something is liable to be exposed here.

BERTHA. Well, now, if it's me you're tryin' to insinuate, you c'n just let Feather-legs stay, fer I am a perfect lady myself, an' I'll not expose nothin'. Judgin' from the looks of your dress, though, he wouldn't be very easy to shock.

HOOD. There you are, Vi. [*Laughs.*] I've told you about your low-necked, backless gowns.

BERTHA. Well, ain't it about time for you all to ask me to be seated an' have off my things?

HOOD. Oh, of course. Be seated, Miss—a— What is your name?

BERTHA. I would say it, now. My name is Bertha Snodgrass [*facing HOOD.*] An' I'm your Ma's own sister's child.

VI. Heavens!

HOOD. Cousin Bertha! How do you do? I'm mighty glad to see you. You must pardon our seeming rudeness; you see, we were not expecting anyone tonight. Bertha, this is my wife.

BERTHA. Violet, ain't it? I've heared Cousin Asa speak

of her. I'm mighty glad to make your acquaintance, Cousin Violet. [Offers hand.]

VI [ignoring BERTHA's hand]. How do you do, Miss Snodgrass.

BERTHA. Yes, I've heared Cousin Asa talk about how purty you wuz. You know he saw you all when you wuz both in Davenport right after you wuz married. [To VI.] I reckon, though, you musta changed a heap since then. You ain't what I'd call uncommon purty, like I 'lowed you'd be. Your complexion is too yaller. Guess you may be bilious. Now, I've got some awful good liver medicine here, that I'll let you have some of before we go to bed.

VI [icily]. Thanks. But I won't deprive you.

BERTHA. Not a-tall. I've got a plenty, I reckin, fer both of us. You can have some of it, too, if you want it, Henry.

HOOD. Oh, no, I don't think I need any of it, Bertha. Give it to Vi.

BERTHA. Well, it wouldn't hurt you none. Pa takes it all the time. Say, have you all done had supper?

VI. We always dine at six o'clock.

BERTHA. Well, that's funny, now. We allays have supper 'bout the same time. But I just got offa the train an' come right on up here, so I ain't had a bite to eat since I finished up my cheese an' crackers on the cars.

HOOD. I'll have Jenkins fix something for you. [Rises and crosses to door as if to call JENKINS.]

BERTHA. Now don't go to no extry trouble fer me. If you've got any cold vittles left, they'll just do fine. Where's the pantry? Reckin I can help myself in my own cousin's house, cain't I?

HOOD. Sure you can. [Goes to left and opens door.] Go right through that door and make yourself at home.

VI. What are you going to do, Henry?

HOOD. Do? What do you mean?

VI. With your cousin. We can't have her here. I'd be humiliated to death.

HOOD. Seems like she's going to have herself here—she's already taken possession.

VI. But, Henry—think of my friends. We must get rid of her before she ruins us with them.

HOOD. Wait a minute now, Vi. Don't go too far. Bertha is my cousin.

VI. Well, you can't *help* that, can you?

HOOD. No, but I don't want to make it any worse. Do you suppose that I would hurt Bertha's feelings for the sake of all your high-headed friends?

VI. Not even for me?

HOOD. Not even for anyone. Bertha is going to stay here until *she* gets ready to leave. She is flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood.

VI. She makes my flesh creep and my blood curdle.

Enter JENKINS

JENKINS. Mr. and Mrs. McGee to see both of you.

VI [*hastily*]. Tell them we are not at home.

HOOD [*intercepting*]. No, bring them in. I want to see McGee about a loan for a couple of thousand.

Exit JENKINS

VI. We'll be sure to be disgraced, if Bertha comes back in while they are here. Mrs. McGee would not know what to think of her.

HOOD. Well, you can keep Mrs. McGee out of the way, if you think she might faint. I need the two thousand pretty badly and McGee has a barrel of money.

VI. Well, then you'd better not let him see your cousin.

Enter MR. and MRS. McGEE, followed by JENKINS

VI. Oh, my dear Mrs. McGee, do come right in. How pleasant to have you call like this. Take off your things and sit down. We were just wishing for you to come. [Aside.] I hope she won't stay long. Bertha may be back any moment.

HOOD. Come in, McGee. Come in. Jenkins, take their wraps.

MCGEE. No, no. We can't stay a minute. Thanks, I'll keep them, Jenkins.

JENKINS retires

MRS. McGEE. We were on our way to the show and we just dropped by to see if you would go with us. I wanted Mr. Hood to explain his process fully to my husband.

HOOD. Oh, Lord!

McGEE. Why, Mr. Hood. What's wrong?

HOOD. Oh—I—have a pain sometimes.

McGEE. Too bad, too bad. Is it gone now?

HOOD. Yes. It leaves as quick as it comes, sometimes.

MRS. McGEE. Do you feel like explaining your process to Charles?

HOOD. Why—a—yes, I'd be glad to, on the way to the show.

VI. Oh, no, we can't go to the show tonight, Henry. Some other time, Mr. McGee, if you will come back, he can tell you.

HOOD. Why, of course we can go. I want to—

VI. But your—our guest.

McGEE. If you have a guest, bring your guest, too.

HOOD. Sure. She'd like to go, I know.

McGEE. That would just make the car full.

VI. But she isn't— Oh, she isn't feeling quite well to-night.

HOOD. Why, she is—*[catches warning glance from VI.]* Yes, that's right. She has got meningitis. You folks just spend the evening with us. I want to talk with you, McGee, anyhow.

McGEE. I'd as soon as not. Picture shows don't interest me.

MRS. McGEE. But your guest— If she is ill, we would disturb her.

HOOD. Not a bit. She won't care.

VI. You know she is so nervous, Henry.

HOOD. Why, how in the—no, she won't mind at all.

MRS. McGEE. Well, I'm not so anxious to go to the show, either. Let's stay, then, Charles.

McGEE. As you say.

VI. Mercy!

MRS. McGEE [concerned]. My dear Mrs. Hood!

HOOD. She has pains, too, sometimes. [Calls.] Jenkins.
 [JENKINS enters.] Take Mr. and Mrs. McGee's wraps now, Jenkins; they have decided to stay.

JENKINS takes wraps and retires again

HOOD [to McGEE]. Let's go into the next room where we can smoke.

McGEE. As you say.

Hood and McGEE go out at center

MRS. McGEE. Maybe your guest would like for us to come and sit a while with her.

VI. Oh, no! I mean, I'm sure she wouldn't. You see, I think she is sleeping a little bit. I'll tell you—while the men are talking and she is asleep, let's walk down to the corner, anyhow. I want to get some—air.

MRS. McGEE [curiously observing VI]. Are you not feeling well tonight, either?

VI. No, I'm not myself at all.

MRS. McGEE. Very well, then, I'll go with you.

VI. Wait a moment, then, I'll get my coat. We can get yours as we go out.

Exit VI center

MRS. McGEE. Rather strange, I think, to leave one's guests like this.

Enter JENKINS

JENKINS. What did you want, ma'am?

MRS. McGEE. Nothing, Jenkins. I was thinking it strange how your mistress is forsaking her guest.

JENKINS [looking about cautiously]. Well, if you's to ask me, ma'am, I'd say she was a strange guest.

MRS. McGEE. Oh, she is. Is she very ill?

JENKINS. Purty cross, ma'am.

*Enter BERTHA, munching piece of cream pie,
 which she observes carefully*

BERTHA. Violet can make awful good pies. I like these here kind without no roof on 'em. I must get her to show me how to make 'em. [Sees MRS. McGEE and JENKINS.] Howdy do.

MRS. McGEE [*surveys her coldly*]. Who is this person, Jenkins?

JENKINS. I beg to be excused, ma'am. I don't know her name.

BERTHA. Well, I guess I can introduce myself. I'm Miss Bertha Snodgrass, of Pitchford, Ohio. Who are you?

MRS. McGEE [*musing*]. One of the servants, I suppose.

BERTHA. Oh, you are? Well, I'd a-never thought it. You don't look a good mate for Feather-legs there.

JENKINS. Miss—whatever kind of grass you said, you made a mistake.

BERTHA. So it would seem. [To MRS. McGEE.] What does Vi call you? Katie or Nora? [MRS. McGEE turns away.] Oh, don't feel bad about it, now. I believe in treatin' ever'body like they's human and I've seen some mighty good people that had waited on tables. [MRS. McGEE elevates head and sniffs.] Oh, so you're one o' them hoity-toity kind, then, are you? Well, I'll take the starch out of your neck yet before I leave.

Enter VI

VI. Did I keep you waiting long, Mrs. McGee?

JENKINS. Here's where friendship is liable to cease. I don't want to be a witness.

Exit JENKINS left

MRS. McGEE. Oh, no, you were not gone long, but did you know when you left that I would be subjected to such annoyance and insult as I have been?

VI. I fail to understand. Bertha, what have you done to Mrs. McGee?

BERTHA. Done to 'er? Nothin', Vi. An' if I's you, I wouldn't try to humor 'er up, neither. I know how hired

help is. If you start givin' one inch to 'em, they'll take a mile.

VI. But, Bertha, this is *Mrs. McGee*.

BERTHA. I don't care if it is. I guess there are plenty of servants as good or better than she is.

MRS. McGEE. I am going. I shall not be insulted longer.

[*Turns away majestically. VI runs to her and takes her arm.*]

VI. My dear Mrs. McGee, please don't go. Let me explain.

MRS. McGEE [*spitefully*]. How can you explain her?

[*Points to BERTHA.*]

BERTHA. Oh, that's easy. The same Lord made me that made you—only when he made you his foot was asleep, so you got all the feelin' out of it.

VI. Bertha, what on earth are you talking about? Mrs. McGee is not my servant. Far from it. She is the wife of Bunker McGee and I was pleased to call her my friend until now; but from what I surmise, I could not blame her if she never spoke to me again.

BERTHA [*musing*]. McGee, McGee.

MRS. McGEE. I scarcely know what to say or think, Mrs. Hood. I feel quite sure, since thinking the matter over, that you did not know what was happening while you were out of the room.

BERTHA. McGee, McGee, McGee. [To MRS. McGEE.] Is your husband's name Charley?

MRS. McGEE [*to VI*]. Is the woman insane?

BERTHA. Look here, that's the second time that fool question has been asked about me tonight. I'll just say this-much in answer to it, though. When ever'body in Pitch-ford took the intelligence test I made a grade next to the preacher. An' what is more, Mrs. Highfaluter, you told me yourself that you wuz one o' the servants an' I can prove it by Feather-legs. I never insulted nobody in my life, so I don't want you to think that I'd start out on you.

VI. Bertha, Bertha.

[MRS. McGEE goes at right, VI clinging to her.]

BERTHA. I'm gettin' tired o' bein' Bertha'd so much. If that's Charley McGee's wife, I'm gonna tell him how foolish she's acted, too.

Enter JENKINS timidly

JENKINS [*nervously*]. If you please, Miss.

BERTHA. Don't you fool with me, Feather-legs—I ain't in no humor to be meddled with. I might hurt you while I'm stirred up so.

JENKINS. Take some of your liver medicine and settle down.

BERTHA [*pacing up and down*]. This place must be a 'sylum.

[JENKINS comes toward her, wagging hands deprecatingly.]

JENKINS. There, there, now, Miss, keep cool, keep cool, keep cool.

BERTHA [*seizes parasol*]. Don't you lay them claws on me, Feather-legs—I'll knock you cold.

JENKINS [*falling back*]. Now, Miss.

BERTHA. I won't, either. I'm the best woman ball player in Pitchford an' if you bat another eye at me, I'll knock that bullet head o' yours for a home run.

[HOOD puts head cautiously inside door at center, but fails to see BERTHA.]

HOOD [*in loud whisper*]. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Yes, sir.

HOOD [*still whispering*]. Are the ladies out?

JENKINS. Yes, sir, and I'll be out, too, in a minute, if you don't help me.

HOOD [*opens door a little more*]. Where's that bottle, Jenkins?

JENKINS. Here's the battle, sir. I need reinforcements, too.

HOOD [*still outside*]. No, not battle. I said *bottle*. Something with a kick in it.

JENKINS. You could get that right here, too, I guess.

HOOD [*steps inside*]. Why, Jenkins, I don't know what to think.

JENKINS. No, sir, I don't, either.

HOOD. Why, what do you mean, Bertha?

BERTHA. I mean business. This whole house is full of lunatics an' I wuzn't takin' any chances on lettin' that one-eyed gander lay his webs on me.

HOOD. Oh, Jenkins won't hurt you.

BERTHA. I know he won't.

JENKINS. Mrs. Hood told me to come in here and get her quiet, sir.

BERTHA. I'm not a baby, you old spraddle-footed fool.

HOOD. That's all right, Bertha. Put down your parasol, you won't need it.

BERTHA. I might. If that feller fools with me again, his life insurance is goin' to be payable.

HOOD. Forget it, Bertha, the ground is too hard for grave-digging. I'm hunting a stimulant for my guest.

BERTHA. I got some asafetida in my grip.

HOOD [*looking about*]. No, no, something to drink. A beverage.

JENKINS. I think the bottle's empty, sir. I'll bring in another.

Exit JENKINS left. Enter McGEE at center

MC GEE. You stayed so long that I decided the flavor must be better in here than elsewhere.

HOOD. I was detained. I want you to meet my cousin, Miss Snodgrass, Mr. McGee.

MC GEE. How d'y' do, Miss Snodgrass? [*Bows formally*.]

BERTHA [*grabs his hand and shakes it vigorously*]. I thought it. I thought it. How are you, Charley McGee?

MC GEE. How did you know my name was Charley?

BERTHA. Well, is that the first time you've been called Charley, since you left Pitchford with one o' ma's towels in your grip?

MCGEE. Pitchford? Pitchford, Ohio? Have you ever been in Pitchford, Ohio?

BERTHA. There's where I still get catalogues from the mail order houses.

MCGEE. And you say your name is—

BERTHA [*interrupting*]. Bertha Snodgrass.

MCGEE. Well, well, I remember you now. You were still wearing hair ribbons, though, when I worked in the Pitchford Bank and boarded with your mother.

HOOD. You boarded with her folks? Sit down and let's hear about it.

[*All three sit.*]

MCGEE. Sure did. About fifteen years ago.

BERTHA [*reminiscently*]. Yes, I was wearin' ribbons an' I remember one time you got one of them an' said you wuz goin' to send it to your sweetheart.

MCGEE. Did I send it?

BERTHA. Yes, you did, so I got a silk scarf of yours an' cut it up to make me another one.

HOOD. So you two are old acquaintances. Jenkins, hurry up with that bottle. We must have a drink on that. I know Bertha won't object.

BERTHA. No, I don't care. Pa allays takes his drink—of sarsaparilla.

JENKINS [*off stage*]. I can't find any, sir.

MCGEE. Let it go. Seeing this young friend of mine again brings up memories that are quite intoxicating themselves.

BERTHA. I can remember a lot, too. For instance, Ma never has got through talkin' about that towel you carried off when you left.

MCGEE. That towel? Oh, yes, I remember that. [To Hood.] You see, when I got home and unpacked I found the thing in my suit case. I suppose it must have got in somehow with the rest.

BERTHA. That's what I told Ma; but she said she never knowed of a towel that could walk, jump or crawl.

MCGEE. I shall send her the best bathroom set I can buy tomorrow.

BERTHA. You needn't to. We still ain't got no bathroom. You might send a new linoleum, though, to put by the kitchen stove to set the tub on.

MCGEE. I'll do that. [Rises.] And, by the way, Hood [slaps him on back] about that loan you mentioned—I am sure the securities you offer are good, but, security or not, the nephew of Tabitha Snodgrass and the cousin of Bertha could borrow all the money I have.

VI and MRS. MCGEE enter at right talking

MRS. MCGEE. Then I'm sure you were not to blame, so we shall let the subject drop. [Halts at seeing others.] Would we not better be going, Charles?

MCGEE. No. I want you to meet a good friend of mine, who is also Mr. Hood's cousin. Miss Snodgrass, this is my wife.

BERTHA. So you are the one who got my ribbon. [Crosses to her, hand outstretched.] Now, don't think for a minute that I hold anything against you for pretending to be a servant. I know you are a dear at heart, or Charley McGee never would have married you.

MRS. MCGEE [takes BERTHA's hand and holds it]. You, then, are the little girl who was a companion for Charles. I only hope that you will become as much a friend of mine as you were of his.

VI [surprised]. Strange things will happen.

HOOD. Sure they will, Vi. On the strength of my relationship to Bertha, Mr. McGee is going to lend me that two thousand.

BERTHA. He allays wuz free-hearted. Why, one time he forgot all about havin' a date to take the cashier's wife an' children to the city till after he'd done let Pa wear out his best pair o' pants.

CURTAIN

THE PACIFIST

CHARACTERS

MRS. PENFIELD, *The Mother*

ROGER, *The Son*

Discovered: MRS. PENFIELD seated, head in hands as if meditating. Across from her ROGER sits on floor engaged with funny paper.

MRS. PENFIELD [after gazing abstractedly outside for a few moments, then regarding ROGER with a sober air, soliloquizes]. I declare, I don't know what on earth to do with that boy. He is driving me distracted. Mrs. Faulkner says that he and her Timothy have been fighting again. Whippings seem to have no effect on him—maybe I could make an appeal to his sense of shame. I'll try it. [Calls.] Roger, come here.

ROGER [lowers paper and raises head to disclose a black eye and long red streak on cheek, as a scratch. Lampblack and red paint will provide realistic results, if properly applied]. I c'n hear, I reckin, 'thout comin' there.

MRS. PENFIELD [firmly]. I said, come here.

ROGER. I c'n hear, I tolle y'.

MRS. PENFIELD. Now, see here, I said come here, and you'd better hear before there is trouble here.

ROGER [going to her on hands and feet]. Yes'm.

MRS. PENFIELD. Now, Roger, I want you to be sensible.

ROGER. How can I? Y'say I'm jest like Pa, an' y'say he's a blockhead.

MRS. PENFIELD. Your father is not in this discussion.

ROGER. No? Well, maybe not, but I heerd Gran'ma say that he wuz in an awful mess.

MRS. PENFIELD [sternly]. Will you hush that? I made no reference to your Grandmother, either.

ROGER. Well, I guess she wuz a-makin' ref'rence to you.

MRS. PENFIELD. That is entirely outside the present question, too, and it doesn't amount to anything.

ROGER. That's what she said about your brother.

MRS. PENFIELD. Don't say that again, sir. You should have more respect for your Uncle Jim than that. Do you hear me? Don't say it again.

ROGER. I never said it about him. 'Twuz *Gran'ma*.

MRS. PENFIELD [*sniffing*]. Well, don't quote your Grandma to me again.

ROGER. Aw, Ma, what y' talkin' 'bout? Y' know I cain't 'tote' *Gran'ma* nowheres. She's too fat.

MRS. PENFIELD. I said *quote*, son. Q-u-o-t-e, *quote*.

ROGER. Oh! What's that?

MRS. PENFIELD. Why, *quote* means to repeat the exact words of another.

ROGER. Another what?

MRS. PENFIELD. Another person. The preacher *quotes* scripture, your teacher probably *quotes* poetry sometimes. Anyone who repeats what some one else has said, is *quoting*.

ROGER. Well, say, Ma, why don't you wimmen change th' name uv yer "Quiltin' Circle" to th' "Quotin' Circle"?

MRS. PENFIELD. I won't have any more of your smart talk, now, Roger. I want to talk to you in a serious attitude.

ROGER. Where is it?

MRS. PENFIELD. Where is what?

ROGER. Th' Sears-Atty Two. I never saw a car with only two cylinders, though.

MRS. PENFIELD. I mean that I want to talk to you about your conduct.

ROGER. I ain't got no duck.

MRS. PENFIELD. Don't interrupt until I have finished. I hear that you have forgotten, or at least disregarded, the motherly admonitions which I gave you yesterday.

ROGER [*aside and searching pockets*]. Gosh, I didn't know she gimme anything like that. I musta lost 'em.

MRS. PENFIELD. I hear that you have been fighting again.

ROGER. Well, I ain't.

MRS. PENFIELD. Why, Roger Penfield!

ROGER. Well, I tell y' I ain't been fightin' again.

MRS. PENFIELD. Why, Roger! How did your eye get so

black, then? And how did your face come to be scratched so, if you haven't been fighting?

ROGER. I never said I hadn't been fightin'. I said I hadn't been fighthin' *again*. Not since th' las' time, I mean.

MRS. PENFIELD. Well, when was that?

ROGER. Oh, 'bout ha'f an hour ago, I guess.

MRS. PENFIELD. Shame! Shame! I thought you and Tim-othy were on calling terms. Why were you fighting?

ROGER. 'Cause we's on callin' terms, I reckin.

MRS. PENFIELD. How could that be?

ROGER. Well, he called me a liar an' I called him another 'n then we went at it good an' proper.

MRS. PENFIELD. And now you're a pretty looking thing. Look at that eye. Look at that face all scratched up.

ROGER. Well, you jest orter see Tim's mug.

MRS. PENFIELD [*half proudly*]. You are a young barbarian, Roger, but you are a hero, too.

ROGER. You are my Ma an' I reckin I hafta take all that, but Tim Murphy had better not call me any names like that, that I don't know what they mean. I'll punch his snoot fer 'im.

MRS. PENFIELD. I believe you must hold to the old adage about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

ROGER. Now, look-a here, Ma. You know blamed good an' well that I ain't gonna let nobody knock my teeth an' eyes out an' not try to git even.

MRS. PENFIELD. How have you been getting along with Jimmy Jones?

ROGER. Aw, to heck with Jimmy Jones. I ain't got no use fer 'im.

MRS. PENFIELD. Why, he is a nice little boy, Roger. You ought to like him.

ROGER. I don't though.

MRS. PENFIELD. What is wrong with Jimmy?

ROGER. Aw, he's a sissy. That's what.

MRS. PENFIELD. I should never have thought of that. I noticed that none of you boys can ever do anything that he can't do as well.

ROGER. I don't keer. He's a sissy. He's a twin with a girl, ain't he?

MRS. PENFIELD. That is a strange reason for calling a boy a sissy. [ROGER seems suddenly to notice something off-stage. He runs to window.] Where are you going, Roger?

ROGER. Just over here to th' winder.

MRS. PENFIELD. Come back. I haven't finished talking to you yet. [Follows him and takes arm to pull him back.]

ROGER [resisting]. Aw, lemme go, Ma.

MRS. PENFIELD [tightening her hold]. I won't. Whatever has come over you, anyhow? Don't you know you might fall out and hurt yourself?

ROGER. Aw, hurt nuthin'. Lemme git my arm loose to wave at Tim.

MRS. PENFIELD. Wave at Tim? Not much, I won't, sir. Why, you have just been *fighting* with Tim, so that is not what you want. You can't fool me.

ROGER. I ain't tryin' to fool you, Ma. Honest Injun, I ain't. I shore nuff wanna wave at Tim.

MRS. PENFIELD. Now, Roger, be careful. You know what becomes of liars.

ROGER. Yes'm, I know. But I do wanna wave at 'im. He's wavin' at me.

MRS. PENFIELD. Really?

ROGER. Yes, he is. Ain't y' gonna leave me wave back at 'im?

MRS. PENFIELD. Yes, if you will promise not to run away, or do anything else.

ROGER. Gosh, Ma! I won't do nothin' but wave. Can't y' trust me?

MRS. PENFIELD. Oh, yes, I am *beginning* to trust you.

ROGER. Well, what makes y' still keep th' pantry locked then? But lemme go quick, so's I c'n wave at Tim.

[MRS. PENFIELD releases ROGER who at once goes back to window and, putting his thumb to his nose in full view of audience, wiggles all his fingers.]

CURTAIN

GABRIEL'S HORN

CHARACTERS

MR. WHITE, *A white fox hunter*

TAD, *His darkey servant. He carries a hunting horn*

REV. AUGUSTUS JONES, *Negro pastor*

SISTER CALLIE CLARK, *Choir leader*

SISTER SUSAN SHANKS, *Parishioner*

ELDER AARON CLARK, *Pillar of the church*

DEACON ABIMELECH CLARK, *Another pillar*

Enter MR. WHITE and TAD, running from right

MR. WHITE [*taking off hat and pretending to sling water from it*]. Just in time to keep from getting soaked, Tad.

TAD. Yas, sah, yas, sah. Dat am a fac'. Us sho is lucky an' den some.

MR. WHITE. That's right too, I'm thinking, Tad. It would have been terrible for you to get wet. You might have faded.

TAD. No, sah, dat woulde hu't me none. But I wuz skeered mah new hat might get wet. [*Takes hat out of his shirt bosom and straightens it out.*]

MR. WHITE. Why, Tad! I thought hats belonged on heads.

TAD. Yas, sah, but yo' see dis heah am mah hat personately an' prividually.

MR. WHITE. Yes, I know that you sold your 'possum hides and bought the hat; but what is it for, if not to wear?

TAD. Well, sah, yo' sees, it's lak dis. I wuz comin' 'long back dar an' when it begince to rain I thought t' mahse'f, now, de hat am all mine, but de haid b'longs to Massa White. Ise gonna take ca' ob mah hat an Massa White kin look a 'ter his own prop'ty.

MR. WHITE. Which I probably should have done. Wool is bad to shrink and if that head of yours decreased any, it wouldn't amount to enough to notice.

TAD. Massa, yo' sholy do lub yo' jokes, don't yo'?

MR. WHITE. Yes, I like you a little bit sometimes.

TAD. Axin' yo' pa'don, Massa, but mebbe dat's de reason Ise so fond ob yo'.

MR. WHITE. Say, by the way, Tad, is this Wednesday?

TAD. How yo' spec's me ter know, ef yo' don't? Is yo' t'ink Ise a walkin' calendah?

MR. WHITE. This *is* Wednesday, Tad. Do you know what that is?

TAD. Sho, dat's We'n'sday.

MR. WHITE. I mean, do you know what falls on Wednesday?

TAD: Yas, sah. Rain on dis 'n'.

MR. WHITE. No, no. Not that. What *comes* on Wednesday?

TAD. Lawd, don' ax me dat.

MR. WHITE. Why, Tad, I'm surprised at you. This is prayer meeting night at this church.

TAD. Dat's a fac'. I fo'got about dat. I orter be kicked by a mule. Heah, Massa, yo' kick me.

MR. WHITE. No. Thanks for the compliment just the same though, Tad.

TAD. I nevah knowed dat I had any sick a thing, Massa, but ef Ise got ary nother'n, yo's welcome to it too.

MR. WHITE. Do you suppose the prayer meeting will meet tonight?

TAD. Lawd, I dunno. Ise not s'posed to s'pose nohow. Maybe dey will an' maybe dey wont. Ef dey does, dey am apt to hab deir fedders too wet to pray much.

MR. WHITE. I doubt if anyone ventures out on a night like this. I'm going to take a nap while it is raining, anyhow, Tad. You may wake me when the rain stops.

TAD. Yas, sah. [Aside.] Who's gonna wake *me* up, mebbe?

MR. WHITE [goes to corner of room, spreads cloak which he carries on floor and lies down on it]. Now, Tad, remember the last time I tried to sleep out like this when you were along? You pestered me every five minutes with some of your nonsense. Now this time I don't want to be disturbed till it stops raining. Do you understand?

TAD. Yas, sah. I unnerstans. I wouldn't bodder yo' ef it wuz to come a sowclone.

TAD sits for few moments, then goes over to MR. WHITE.

TAD. Well, well, Massa am done already asleep. Po' man, he sholy am tiahed. But he do lubs ter foller dem houn's. Reckin when he die an' git to Heaben, ef Ole Salt Peter won't let dem houn's fru de Gol'en Gate, Massa he'll 'fuse to come in.

TAD goes to door or window and looks out

TAD. Peahs lak maybe it am gonna rain all night, an' I don' ca' ef it does, neithah. Mo' rain, mo' res'. Ise gonna res' some right now, too. [Goes to corner opposite MR. WHITE.] I'll jes lay me down t' sleep on dis li'l bench an' take a nap mahse'f. It'll jes be a *sho't* nap, though, cause de bench ain't ve'y long to sta't wid.

TAD lies down on bench and rests. After a few moments have passed a loud stamping and scraping is heard off stage at right. TAD sits up.

TAD. Lan' o' Goshen! Dat mus' be a earthquake, sho!

Enter REV. JONES, SISTERS CLARK and SHANKS and BROTHERS AARON and ABIMELECH CLARK. They fail to notice either MR. WHITE or TAD.

REV. JONES. De Lawd sez, "I will prove mah vessels." Dis night am a good time fo' provin'.

BROTHER ABIMELECH. Amen, Bruddah Jones. But dat's de fust time I evah hea'd a covahed wagon pulled by a pa' o' jinnies, called a vessel.

BROTHER AARON. Abimelech, don' show yo' ignorumps. Us is *all*, vessels.

SISTER SUSAN. Ef it hadn't been fo' dat wagon sheet, I believe dis vessel would o' floundahed in de storm.

SISTER CALLIE. De Lawd sez He will pervide, Sistah Shanks. He am de one dat pervided dat sheet.

BROTHER AARON. Git out. Sistah Callie, dat's mah sheet. I pervided dat.

SISTER CALLIE. No, Bruddah Aaron, ef yo' is mah own

blood bruddah 'sides bein' mah bruddah in de chu'ch, I'll hab to 'sputify wid yo' dere. Yo' wuz on'y a insterment to de pervision.

REV. JONES. Bruddahs an' Sisteren, I feels lak great wuk am to be done heah tonight. I doubts ef anybody else ob de congergation is apt to be heah, but somehow it peahs to me lak angels am abroad.

TAD [aside]. Ef dey is, dey's purty apt to git deir wing 'fedders wet.

BROTHER ABIMELECH. Yas, sah, Bruddah Jones, somehow or othah Ise got dat same insignificant feelin' dat we am in de presence ob a unknown powah.

SISTER SUSAN. I knows dat some kin' o' extemporaneous happ'nin' is gonna trespire heah, ca'se dis eb'nin' when I wuz cuttin' up a chicken fo' suppah, de livah an' de gizza'd wuz bofe growed togeddah.

REV. JONES. Hab no fea', mah mos' dea'ly belubbed. God pertects.

SISTER CALLIE. Le's all sing some good ole song dat us all knows. I feels so full ob de powah an' spirit dat Ise gotta do somepin befo' I runs ovah.

REV. JONES. Amen, Sistah Callie. Yo' am a lamp to ouah footsteps an' a light to ouah pathway. I dunno what us'd do widout yo' as ouah choi' leadah.

BROTHER AARON. What'll us sing?

SISTER SUSAN. "Swing Low, Sweet Cha'iot" is a good un.

BROTHER ABIMELECH. Amen, Sistah Shanks, yo' su'gestion is lak de retu'n ob de Proje-kin Son. Jes' at de right time.

SISTER CALLIE. Evahbody sing. [She starts "Sweet Char-iot." Others join. At end of first verse, REV. JONES raises his hand to command silence.]

REV. JONES. Befo' us sings de nex' stanza I wants to rema'k a few wuds by way ob disco'se. Dat am a gran' an elecuted ol' song, mah dea'ly belubbed. It sho am. Dat am a song dat oughta be writ on de hearts an' min's ob all de risin' generation wid coal-black, blood-red lettahs ob ink, wid a pen made fum de angel's wing ob mem'ry. Allays when singin' dat song, I has only to close mah eyes

an' let mah discrimination loose an' I c'n see dat cha'iot deseen'in' as it wuz fum de porticoes ob Heaben. Amen, peepul. Yas, sah. I sees dat gol'en cha'iot pulled by six big, milk-white ho'ses, an' seated dar a-hol'in' onter de lines am de Angel Gab'el, an' in one han' he hol's a silvah bugle dat soun's out de call fo' all de saints to come gathah roun' de throne.

SISTER CALLIE. Amen, Bruddah Jones, Amen! An' I c'n see de same thing dat yo' sees, only in Gab'el's lap am a-layin' de Lam's Book o' Life an' in it am writ de names ob all de saints.

BROTHER AARON. U-m-h-u-m-m. Oh, ain't dat so? An' when de Angel Gab'el blow his ho'n, all de po', wea'y chillun ob men heah below in dis worl' ob sin an' sorrer where moths corrup's an' rus' cankahs, will be gatha'd up to ole Ab'r'ham's bosom in de twinklin' ob de eye.

TAD [*aside*]. Somethin' else is gonna happen heah in de twinklin' ob somebody's eye, ef yo' all ain't keerful.
[*Fondles his hunting horn.*]

SISTER SUSAN. Amen! Hallelujah! An' dere'll be weepin' an' wailin' an' gnashin' ob teeth, when all de weak-ed heahs dat awful voice, lak de sound ob thundah or mighty rollin' watahs, say, "Depa't fum me, yo' wo'kahs ob nicotine, fo' I knows yo' knock."

BROTHER ABIMELECH. But de saints'll come rejoicin' in deir robes ob spotless white, an' *dey'll* wea' bright, shinin' crowns.

BROTHER AARON. Oh, ef de Angel Gab'el 'd jes' toot his ho'n!

[TAD *lifts horn to his lips as if to blow it, then slowly lowers it.*]

TAD [*aside*]. No, dat won't nevah do. Massa White said not to 'sturb him till it quit rainin'.

REV. JONES. Sing anuddah vuss, Sistah Callie.

[SISTER CALLIE starts second verse, in which others join.
All are now worked up to earnestness which soon becomes frenzy. The singers sway to and fro with the

time of the song, clasping their hands or clapping them and looking upward. During the singing of the second verse, TAD lifts horn to his lips several times as if to blow it but each time reluctantly lowers it without doing so. At close of second verse SISTER SUSAN springs out in front of others, waving her arms and shouting hysterically.]

SISTER SUSAN. Oh, bruddahs an' sistahs—dey ain't but one sistah 'sides mahse'f—but I sez sistahs anyhow.

OTHERS. Amen! Amen!

SISTER SUSAN. God has filled mah hea't so full dat I lubs evahbody.

BROTHER ABIMELECH. Amen, Sistah Susan! Amen!

SISTER SUSAN. Oh, I tells yo' all ag'in, dat when I seen dat chicken's livah an' 'is gizza'd bofe stuck togeddah, I knowed somethin' wuz a-comin'. I dun see it *right now*. [Gazes toward ceiling in a fixed and abstracted manner.]

[*Others look at each other in alarm.*]

BROTHER AARON. What am it, Sistah Shanks? What's yo' sees?

SISTER SUSAN. I looks up into de Heabens, an' I sees dat cha'iot swingin' down right now.

REV. JONES. Oh, Lawd, do let it come!

SISTER CALLIE. I sees it! I sees it! Look! Fo'kses, look!

[*Points upward.*]

BROTHER ABIMELECH. Jes' let de Angel toot 'is ho'n!

[*All are looking upward in spellbound attitude when TAD raises horn to lips and blows a long drawn out blast. Pandemonium breaks loose. All rush out frantically save MR. WHITE and TAD.*]

QUICK CURTAIN

HAM AND SAM

CHARACTERS

HAM and SAM, Two harmless colored men

Discovered: SAM seated at center of stage as curtain rises, whetting large "fake" razor on sole of his shoe.

SAM [sings to tune of "Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'"]

I had a li'l fight wid Rastus Brown
His wife wuz right dere too.
I dun had dat niggah down,
But 'is wife waded in wid a shoe.

But I ain' gonna run no mo', no mo',
An' I ain' gonna run no mo'.
Dis blade o' mine will cut so fine,
Dat I ain' gonna run no mo'.

Enter HAM from right, staggering.

HAM. Yo' nevah did run, nohow, did yo', Sam?

SAM. Well, maybe not. We cain't al'ays be so shuah 'bout dat kin' o' subjeck. In my day an' when I wuz really anxious to run, at times an' 'casions bes' knowed to mahself, I passed lots uv 'em dat *wuz* runnin'.

HAM [stands unsteadliy]. Dem boats o' yo's [regards SAM's feet closely] peahs to me lak is built mo' fo' powah dan fo' speed, big boy.

SAM. Say, man, looka heah. Yo's reelin' lak a fishahman dat's caught a fo' poun' bass. What's de mattah wid yo?

HAM. I's seasick.

SAM. Git out, niggah. Yo' ain't nevah even seen a pictuah ob de sea, much less been on it to git seasick.

HAM. Yeah, I seen one pictuah ob de sea one time, long yeahs ago, w'en I wuz a boy.

SAM. An' yo' means to tell me dat it am jest now takin' effec' on yo' an' makin' yo' seasick?

HAM [*sits*]. No, no. Dat ain't it. I's jest been out on de street watchin' dem pummanent waves go by.

SAM. W'y, man, I nevah would git sick at sich as dat. Nice li'l young fresh watah waves ain't gonna huht nobody. Dem would compare to waves on de ribbah.

HAM. Yeah, but some o' dem I seen wuz mo' lak ole tough salt watah waves fum de Palantic Oceum.

SAM. Yessah, I guess it am a factuality dat a man do feel completely at sea among some ob 'em.

HAM. Uh-huh. Dat's how come dat poet poeted 'bout "what am de wild waves sayin'." 'Tain't safe nary bit. W'y, I's got so uneasy 'bout mahse'f dat I dun went an' had mah life insuahed.

SAM. Sho nuff? Ef yo' jest got what yo' is wuth to civ'lization, it ain't wuth de papah it's wrote on.

HAM. Humph. Man, I got mahse'f insuahed fo' ten thousand dollahs.

SAM. How on earth did yo' evah manage to do dat, wid yo' fo'ks all so unhealthy.

HAM. Well, at de fust place, I tole 'em de trufe—

SAM [*interrupting*]. I don' b'lieves it possible fo' yo' to do any sich, but go on.

HAM. Sho nuff, I tole 'em de trufe. I didn' know no bettah.

SAM. Well, I betcha didn' git no insuahance w'en yo' tole 'em 'bout yo' Pa dyin' at fo'ty-two wid heart trouble, an' yo' Ma dyin' at thi'ty-eight wid two buckets o' 'lasses.

HAM. I didn' fo' a fac'. But den I tries anuddah place.

SAM. What yo' tell 'em at dat place?

HAM. I tole 'em dat Pa died at de immatuah age ob ninety-two—

SAM [*interrupting*]. Wid heart trouble?

HAM. No, no. Fum de effects ob gibbin' up his seat to a lady in a airplane bus.

SAM. A purty good, reas'nable lie. But what about yo' Ma dat died so young?

HAM. Oh, huh? I tole 'em she swallered a gol' tooth an' it gib 'er de Bright's disease.

SAM. Did yo' tell yo' wife 'bout gittin' yo' life insuahed?
 HAM. No, sah, I nevah. An' what's mo', I don't aims to,
 neithah. Mah life is in enough danger as it is.

SAM. Aw fiddle, Ham. Yo' knows dat brown-skin beauty
 o' yo's is hahmless.

HAM. Yeah. *I knows it.* She's jest about as hahmless as
 a she-male tigah. 'Sides dat, she ain't no *brown skin
 beauty*.

SAM. I don't see why she ain't.

HAM. I does. De Lawd jes' nevah made 'er day way,
 dat's why.

SAM. She's yo' wife, so I guess yo'd orter know 'bout huh,
 ef anybody do, but I wuz thinkin' dat she wuzn't so very
 uncommon black. Is she?

HAM [sarcastically]. *No she ain't black.* W'y, man, dat
 woman am so black dat when she cries, puah ole ink runs
 down huh cheeks an' she uses shoe blackin' fo' face cream.

SAM. Yo' speaks in plain words all right.

HAM. An' mean—dey ain't no tellin' how mean dat
 woman is.

SAM. Yo' don't say.

HAM. Yes, I does. W'y jest de othah day she hit me wid
 huh sock.

SAM. Well, don't seem lak dat orter hu't much. Jest a
 sock.

HAM. Yeah, but yo' don't know dat woman o' mine lak
 I does. She had huh foot in dat blamed sock.

SAM. Dat *wuz* bad.

HAM. But she ain't al'ays bad. Dere's times w'en she
 gits plum lovin'.

SAM [reminiscently]. I say she do.

HAM [threateningly]. What's dat yo' say?

SAM [alarmed]. Oh, I say, do she?

HAM. Say, looka heah, man. Mebbe yo' knows too much
 knowledge fo' de size ob yo' knowah. [Advances upon
 SAM, fingers crooked as if to grasp his throat.]

SAM [flourishes razor]. Keep back away fum me, cullud
 man. Yo' fingahs looks lak dey might had p'ison oak
 on 'em.

HAM [*halting*]. How come yo' knows so much 'bout mah fam'ly?

SAM. I don' knows no nuthin' 'bout yo' fam'ly, 'ceptin' what yo' said yo'se'f.

HAM. No, I guess not.

SAM. Honest. Dat wuz jest a slip ob my tongue got me in bad.

HAM [*convinced*]. Yeah, kinda lak it wuz a slip ob yo' fingah dat rattled de latch on de hen house dat time ole Deacon Jones filled yo' full o' bird shot.

SAM. Nevah min' 'bout dat shot now. Dat's dun past.

Say, man, yo' is determined to run dis conversation into somep'n bad. Le's change de subjeck to mo' pleasant tropics.

HAM. Awri'. Change it yo'se'f, den, ef yo's a magicium.

SAM. W'at yo' mean—ef I's a—magicium?

HAM. Yo' said, change de subjeck, didn' yo'?

SAM. Suah—but—

HAM [*interrupting*]. No but about it, de subjeck am lead Now, le's see yo' change dat to feathahs, or some othah tropic.

SAM. Say, niggah, yo' knows ef I could I would.

HAM. Uh-huh. An *ef* de toad had wings, he wouldn't hab so many corns on 'is anatomy.

SAM. W'at's dat?

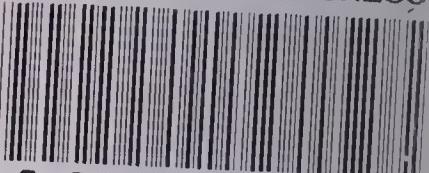
HAM. Dat's—oh, I dunno, 'ceptin' dat's whah de co'ns am.

SAM. Well, den, dat bein' de case, de nex' time yo' aggravates yo' insinuations by tryin' t' intimidate me, I's a-gwineter take mah anatomy to yo', an' knock yo' plum inter de middle ob nex' week.

HAM. Now, lemme see. Yo' sets aroun' a heap—I guess yo' must aims to come at me lak a craw-dad.

CURTAIN

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